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ABSTRACT

As part of a larger study of systemic educational reform in rural Alaska, this case study examines the implementation of the Alaska Onward to Excellence (AOTE) improvement process in the village of Tatitlek in south-central Alaska. The village has about 100 residents, mostly of Alutiiq heritage (Native peoples of Prince William Sound). A three-room K-12 school serves about 23 students. The aftermath of the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill turned the village toward increased connection to the outside and intentional planning for the future. A main AOTE goal is a community-school partnership that often focuses on integrating Native knowledge, culture, and language into the school. In Tatitlek, however, the overriding priority was ensuring student success both in and outside the village. In the early stages, AOTE meetings enjoyed strong turnout, and participants reached consensus on which district goals should be pursued locally. However, later participation dropped considerably. The district took the community goals and developed dramatic changes to curriculum and instruction: the Chugach Instructional Model, which progresses from drill to real-life connections; standards-based curriculum, assessment and report card; emphasis on hands-on learning; and Anchorage House, an urban residential experience for secondary students. Improved school-community relations were supported by the strong, innovative leadership of district staff; high levels of trust among all parties; and new teachers who are highly respectful of Native lifestyle and have become friends and advocates within the community. Barriers to sustainability and a student attitude survey are discussed. Appendices describe Anchorage House, district standards, beliefs, student goals and the AOTE action plan. (SV)

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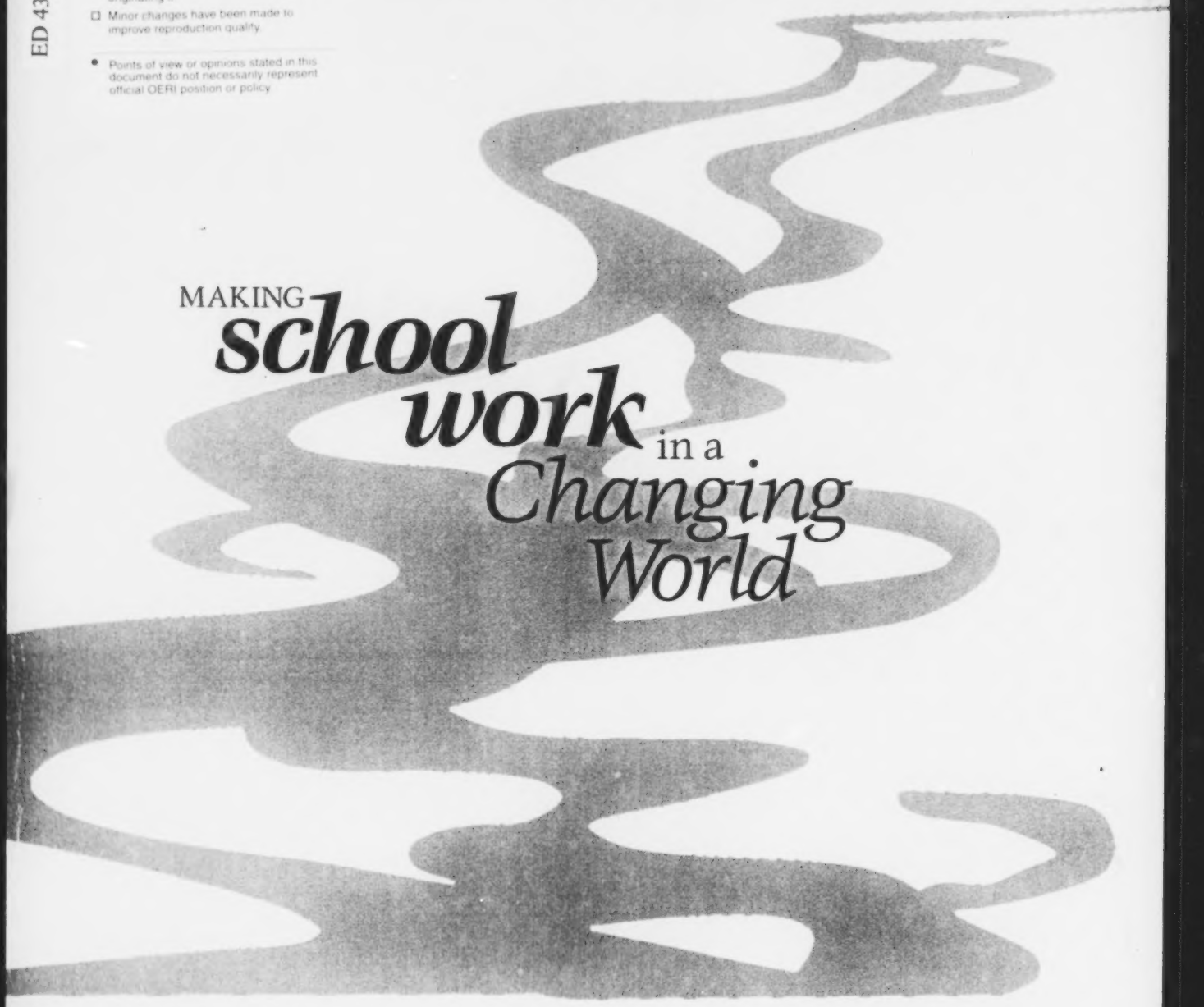

MAKING *school work* in a *Changing World*

TATITLEK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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October 1999

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MAKING SCHOOL WORK IN A CHANGING WORLD: TATITLEK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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The sun shines brightly off the waters of Prince William Sound, and the Chugach mountains seem close enough to touch. Trees grow robustly, the air is clean, and mammoth birds hover near the skiffs. This picture of growth and bounty seems a world in itself, quite untouched by modern life. Tucked into a cove in this scene is the small Native village of Tatitlek, a picturesque town of under 100 people who have made this area their home for centuries.

As remote as the village may seem, it is certainly no stranger to the strains of modernization and increasing connectedness to the outside world. The village has seen its subsistence lifestyle disrupted by environmental disasters and abuse, its language and customs fall away, and its children confronted with having to choose whether to remain in the village or pursue their interests away from home. Dealing with these issues has become a focus for many villagers who want to create their own place in the world rather than allowing external factors to determine their future. This process of creating an identity for itself as the village modernizes has presented a number of complex issues and opportunities for residents, not the least of which is how village schooling fits into its aspirations for economic growth and cultural preservation.

The purpose of this study is to explore how schooling has been remade and improved to meet the multifaceted needs of this changing community. Broadly, it uncovers the degree to which community voice has increased in the school and gauges whether student experiences and learning have improved. The research is more specifically focused on determining progress towards Tatitlek's common goals for its school: that students will be able to make a successful transition to life after school in any environment, and that they will learn to set and achieve personal, family, and community goals.

Exploring Tatitlek's Past

The "Windy Place"

Tatitlek is the oldest remaining Alaska Native village in Prince William Sound, although it is not known as an "old village" in local folklore. Tatitlek means "windy place" in the Native language, Sugcestun. Anthropologists speculate that Tatitlek was originally the site of a winter village that eventually became a year-round settlement when the village was relocated from a nearby site being mined for copper by the Russians in 1902 (McClintock Land Survey and Planning Co., 1989).

The cultural and ethnic heritage of the area indicates that various Native groups have been in residence for many centuries. Ethnographic studies have revealed that while the Pacific Eskimo has a distinct historical, cultural, and linguistic identity, there is little evidence of a widely dispersed tribal organization (Clark, 1984). Prince William Sound Natives have historically been identified as Aleutian, Eskimo, Koniag, Chugach Eskimo, and others. The current preferred term is Alutiiq, which differentiates the Native people of the Prince William Sound region from Aleutians as a culturally separate entity.

Historical records show that Alaska Natives were in residence at the current site when European contact was first recorded in 1778, but early contact with European explorers, trappers, and hunters had little recorded impact on the Alutiiq people. In fact, initial contact with Europeans has been characterized as a "silent encounter" (Clark, 1984). While the tribes conducted some trade with these early Europeans, the subsistence economy and traditional culture was not dramatically altered by their presence. It was not until nearly a century later, when Russians entered Prince William Sound in search of sea otter furs, that traditional lifestyle and beliefs were replaced by Russian Orthodox religion, language, and customs. While the Native Alutiiq people initially resisted the Russian traders, who frequently took them as slaves or in indentured servitude, Russian ways eventually replaced many traditional customs and beliefs. These influences are still evident to the present day.

Figure 1
Significant Historical Events in Prince William Sound and in Tatitlek

1741	Captain Bering comes to Kayak Island, locates Chugach camp site
1778	Captain Cook visits Prince William Sound
1794	20 Russians visit "Tatitkiatzk" village
1880	Tatitlek listed in the census with a population of 73
1893	Commercial salmon fishing expands from the Copper River to Prince William Sound
1902	Ellamar copper mine opens a few miles from Tatitlek
1906	First school for Native people established at Tatitlek
1922	Influenza epidemic; half Tatitlek's population dies
1964	Earthquake destroys Chenega (a neighboring village), most survivors resettle in Tatitlek
1971	Passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
1974	Molly Hootch decision, making services through 12th grade an option for village schools
1983	Importation and sale of alcohol banned in Tatitlek
1984	New school built
1989	*Exxon Valdez* oil spill
1994	Current school superintendent and staff hired
1995	AOTE training begins

Winds of Change

"We have a lot to be proud of!"

—Tatitlek elder

The present-day village of Tatitlek lies nestled along the northeastern coastline of Prince William Sound, approximately 200 air miles southeast of Anchorage. Residents here enjoy a stunning view of the Chugach and Kenai mountains to the north and east, while to their west lies Bligh Island, the site of the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. Trees and tundra surround the village, distinctive for its cheerfully painted houses and the bright blue cupola atop the Russian Orthodox church.

The village itself is situated on a hillside. A ferry and boat docks stretch out from the waterfront; the community health clinic, village council office, and other service buildings are at the base of town, along with the village's older houses and teacher residences. Two more recent housing developments lie in straight lines on two streets further up the hill. At the top is the three-classroom school. A village-operated airstrip and storage buildings are located half a mile outside of the village, near the waste

facilities. Well-maintained dirt and gravel roads connect the small village and the airstrip.

In addition to a school serving kindergarten through 12th grade, there is a health clinic, a post office, a community center that will house a new teen center, and two churches: the long-standing Russian Orthodox church and a newer chapel holding Protestant services. There have been three recent major housing projects in Tatitlek, one by the Bureau of Indian Affairs after the 1964 earthquake and subsequent influx of refugees from neighboring Chenega, 18 homes built in 1982 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and an additional cluster of homes built in the last seven years.

Despite its relative proximity to Alaska's population centers, travel to Tatitlek is severely limited by the rugged terrain. There is no road access to the village and travel is only available by boat, on the biweekly mail plane, or by chartered flights available in nearby Valdez (22 air miles west of Tatitlek) or Cordova (30 air miles southeast of Tatitlek). In the summer, the village is also regularly served by a ferry, part of the state-marine highway system.

According to data verified yearly by the Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs, the 1997 headcount in Tatitlek was 99. The population is fairly stable, with many residents making Tatitlek their lifelong home. The last census, completed in 1989, indicated that at least half of the population was originally from Tatitlek, with an additional 13 to 18% from other Prince William Sound communities. Tatitlek residents who originated from outside the village also included a few non-Natives who married into the community, the school teachers, and their families. Approximately 85% of Tatitlek residents are of Alutiiq or other Alaska Native heritage.

Tatitlek's climate is coastal and fairly mild. Winter temperatures range from 17 to 28 degrees, summers range from 49 to 63 degrees. Tatitlek is blanketed by 28 inches of rain and 150 inches of snow every year. Winds, fog, and precipitation frequently prohibit travel to and from the village, especially during winter and spring months.

Services in the village are quite modern. All houses have indoor plumbing, telephone, and electric service, and heat is provided by oil, gas, or wood. Most villagers get around town on foot or four-wheelers, although there are a few privately owned and

village council trucks in town. Nearly every home has a television. Computers are available at the school and village office, but there is currently no access to the Internet because of the unstable nature of satellite telephone service and prohibitive cost.

For a variety of reasons, Tatitlek has a very low level of poverty and unemployment in comparison to similar Native communities throughout Alaska. The village has seen a recent influx of activity, funding, and change in the wake of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, which severely restricted the ability of villagers to subsist off of traditional fish and game harvests. Proximity to Valdez, Cordova, and Anchorage has allowed villagers to seek employment in local fishing, service, and oil industries. Data collected for a 1990 Alaska Department of Fish and Game study on resource harvest and use (the most current available) showed that 56% of village adults held some cash employment in the 1988–89 year (Stratton, 1990). This report also documents that before the Valdez oil spill, employment for Tatitlek residents was dominated by commercial fishing.

Since the spill, employment and subsistence patterns have changed substantially. At the writing of this report, only two Tatitlek residents hold commercial fishing licenses as the fish population is just beginning its slow recovery. Subsistence activities such as hunting fowl, seal, fish, and game continue to provide a major source of food for villagers, although these activities are supplemented with food and goods purchased and flown or shipped in from Anchorage, Valdez, or Cordova.

In addition to the commercial fishing industry, the school district and local government are two other significant employers. The school annually employs three non-Native teachers, all of whom are brought into the village. Local women also work at the school, including one teacher's aide who serves as a cook during breakfast and teaches Indian Education 20 to 30 hours per week, one school secretary/classroom aide who completes much of the paperwork and works 30 hours per week, and one librarian/custodial assistant who works 20 to 30 hours per week. The village employs two health aides at the local clinic and provides salaried positions for a village president and secretary, who run the village government. There are other service jobs such as postmaster, seasonal construction, and facilities maintenance for village members. The

village has also recently built an oyster bed that ships oysters to Anchorage and beyond and employs four or five villagers at a high hourly wage.

Despite the lack of a substantial local cash economy to provide jobs, virtually no one in Tatitlek is without income. Cash payments from the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 and payments related to damages suffered from the Valdez oil spill provide enough income that most villagers enjoy a fairly high quality of life: most are able to provide food and shelter for their families as well as travel frequently outside the village (mostly to neighboring towns or to Anchorage) and to sponsor cultural activities and travel abroad for their children.

Tatitlek residents share a strong sense of pride about their hometown. They are proud of the fact that the village has banned the sale and importation of alcohol and that virtually no one receives "welfare" from the state. During almost every interview villagers were quick to point out the natural beauty of the town's location, the many innovations in the village, and the positive attributes of the village community. The village is also proud of its social stability and its ability to cope with tragedies and disasters such as the oil spill and the earthquake of 1964.

Village Governance

The village is governed by an Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) Council. This is a tribal organization that provides services for the community, including operation and maintenance of the water, sewer, solid waste, and electrical systems. On a practical level, most day-to-day decisions in the village are made by the tribal chief, Gary Kompkoff, who has held that elected position for the past 20 years.

During his tenure, the village has changed dramatically. Mr. Kompkoff illustrated this point during an interview in which he said that the village had gone from an "isolated, simple, subsistence-based community with an annual budget of $6,000 to a more complex and sophisticated community with a multimillion dollar budget." The progress and prosperity of the village are widely attributed to the good work and commitment of Chief Kompkoff, and the villagers implicitly trust him to make sound decisions that will benefit the community. The village council, which is scheduled to

meet monthly to make decisions, in reality meets far less frequently. For major decisions affecting the village, Chief Kompkoff either polls the council and elders informally or calls a meeting. Otherwise, he makes the decisions alone based on what he knows about people's perspectives and concerns.

He is confident that the village shares a general vision for its future and most people feel that he faithfully represents that vision. "To me, being chief means bringing all the factions of the village together and keeping any one faction from taking the village's attention away from what is best in the long run." Chief Kompkoff articulated this long-term vision as one with an improved infrastructure for tourism and local industry to develop. While some villagers oppose any tourism, the level of dissent is mitigated by the careful work of the chief. He was adamant that these changes occur at the village's own pace, by its own design, and on its own terms. "There is a long way to go before they [villagers] are ready for tourists to pour in for hunting or learning about the Native life."

Tides are Turning

At least three events over the past 35 years have linked Tatitlek more closely to its neighboring communities and to government activity in the area (Davis, 1984). The great Alaska earthquake of 1964 virtually destroyed the nearby village of Chenega and survivors were relocated to Tatitlek, doubling its population and prompting a great deal of construction and government activity. The 1971 passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) stimulated increased government and policy-making activity in the village as well as closer contact and communication with outside authorities and other villages. Village leaders had to become savvy interpreters of the law and implement its precepts for the benefit of their community. Finally, the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Prince William Sound brought a flurry of activity (such as the building of a new ferry dock and the presence of clean-up crews) and eventual income to Tatitlek, even as it seriously depleted its traditional natural resources. The presence of clean-up crews, researchers, oil industry representatives, Alaska state officials, and countless others had the effect of opening the community up even further to the outside world.

The spill quite possibly also had the effect of turning the eyes of the villagers outward. While Tatitlek had been partially integrated into regional culture and economy, the oil spill made clear that this was no longer the remote, isolated, and self-sufficient community it once was. The village mindset shifted to accept that prosperity and progress would only come to the village through increased connection to the outside world and intentional planning for the future. As Chief Kompkoff remarked, "Subsistence is still an important part of the culture and life of the village and we would prefer this be the primary way of life for us, but we need to balance that with a job-based economy." He envisions a village that is much more self-sufficient and expressed worry that outside funding sources were dwindling under fiscal conservatism at the state and federal levels.

This, then, is the entry point for the exploration of school change in Tatitlek. Villagers were ready to change their education system to support their visions for both economic progress and preservation of traditional Native ways. Years of insensitive and culturally inappropriate schooling in the village were not helping their children learn to find healthy ways to live in two worlds. Increasing outside contact revealed the inadequacy of their school to help them fulfill their vision for the future. Disaffected, unmotivated students pointed to the need not just to improve the school, but to shift its focus entirely. The basic education of the past was no longer adequate to actualize the village's goals for itself.

The Research Study

Tatitlek was chosen as a site for this study for a number of reasons. First, the overall research design for the study called for the inclusion of at least one very small site that had implemented or was implementing the Alaska Onward to Excellence process. As an isolated village with less than 100 residents, Tatitlek seemed a strong potential candidate. The research design also called for studying at least one site in its first year of AOTE implementation (the year following training completion), which matched Tatitlek's schedule.

Data collection for this case study occurred over a two-year period between 1996 and 1998. The research team responsible for collecting data for this study consisted of a senior researcher from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), the head teacher in Tatitlek, and a community member from Tatitlek who is also a recent graduate of Tatitlek Community School. The district superintendent, assistant superintendent, and their staff were also valuable contributors to the research process.

Midway through the first year of data collection, the responsibility to lead the research on this case study was transferred from the original senior researcher, Joan Shaughnessy, to me. While I authored this case study, it represents contributions from both senior researchers. While the bulk of data collection work was the responsibility of senior researchers, the local team members were responsible for scheduling meetings and events during the senior researchers' site visits, keeping the senior researchers informed of developments in the village, sending relevant documents to the senior researchers, administering student surveys, and conducting a few interviews.

Data were collected beginning in December 1996 during a telephone interview with the Chugach School District superintendent. The data collection process continued with research team meetings in Anchorage, site visits by the senior researcher, and frequent telephone and written communication with the village research team.

Figure 2
Chronology of Major Data Collection Events

January 1997	Research Team Meeting in Anchorage
March 1997	Sr. Researcher Site Visit to Tatitlek
April 1997	Research Team Meeting in Anchorage
October 1997	Sr. Researcher Site Visit to Tatitlek
December 1997	Research Team Meeting in Anchorage
March 1998	Research Team Meeting in Anchorage
April 1998	Sr. Researcher Site Visit to Tatitlek
Autumn 1998	Research Team Meeting in Anchorage
Autumn 1998	Sr. Researcher Site Visit to Tatitlek (final)

The data used in this study were collected from a variety of sources in order to triangulate findings from one source with another:

- Individual interviews and focus groups with teachers, students, parents, and community members were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed.
- Classroom observations in the three classes were conducted during each site visit.
- The senior researcher shadowed a student for a day.
- The Quality of Student Life Scale student survey was administered and analyzed.
- A community survey was conducted during a school celebration at the beginning of the 1997–98 school year.
- Student report cards were reviewed.
- AOTE artifacts, the district teacher's manual (which thoroughly outlines reform strategies and standards), district assessments, improvement plans, individual learning plans, and some student works were collected and analyzed.
- Student achievement results for a number of years were analyzed.
- A brief review of the literature on the history of the Chugach area was conducted to learn about the cultural, historical, and economic context of Tatitlek.

As each draft of this report was completed, a copy was sent for review to the Chugach School District superintendent, the Tatitlek village chief, and both local research team members to check for accuracy and appropriateness. In addition, intermittent findings from data collection events, such as the administration of the Quality of School Life Scale survey and the community survey, were shared with research team members and their implications discussed.

The senior researcher has chosen to orient this report around the individual voices of Tatitlek residents as much as possible to help the reader make sense of what is most important to the community. However, it should be noted that, given the small size of this community, it is often impossible to mask the identities of those who were interviewed. Therefore, the author has been judicious in the use of negative quotes which might cause some hard feelings among residents. This said, it should also be noted that almost all comments made by interview subjects about the school, the change process, and the community were highly positive. This must be kept in mind should the reader perceive any lack of criticism from villagers.

A School That Works

"I love school and I believe it is a big part of how I'm going to turn out and what I'm going to do."

–Tatitlek Community School student

Education Reform

The legacy of education in Tatitlek, as in most Alaska Native villages, is not a positive one. Until the late 1970s, education services went only through the eighth grade, at which point most chose not to leave the village for high school. Those who did decide to leave were sent to Mt. Edgecumbe in Sitka or to nearby Valdez where students stayed with relatives. While many students who left the village for schooling report that they learned a lot while away, they resent having had to leave to get an education and having had a curriculum irrelevant to their daily lives and their future.

One community member who has noticed a great change in village education over the years said of schooling in the past, "Five to ten years ago there was some pressure from folks in the village to get more opportunities for the kids, but now the community seems to be satisfied because the situation is better than it was." When asked how education had improved, she reported that, in the past, there had been:

> Eighth graders who could not read and there were not as many high school graduates. There were kids who did not want to leave the village to go off to high school and so [Tatitlek had] a very limited education. But once there were secondary schools in all villages, the community pressures were reduced. The number of students getting a high-school education increased—now we have most students able to graduate from high-school and some of the younger adults in the community are getting into the swing of things.

Even when Tatitlek Community School began offering K–12 services in the mid-1970s, villagers report that their experiences there were not entirely positive. Teachers were often demeaning toward the Native children, did not socialize with villagers, and did not allow their children to play with other children in the village. Students were called "stupid" and were subjected to a curriculum vastly out of sync with their understanding of the world and their daily lives. Teacher turnover was frequent, leaving little opportunity for students to form relationships with their teachers or for teachers to

properly acculturate to life in Tatitlek. When a new school building was erected in 1984, villagers report a sense of pride and ownership that this was "our school." Even then, meaningful change did not occur in the school and many students continued to have poor school experiences.

In 1994, a new superintendent was hired with a mandate to improve the schools and their relationships with the communities. The new leadership at the district level brought with it many ideas for improving the schools, a carefully selected set of new teachers, and a heretofore unknown willingness to listen to and respect the Native communities. The Chugach School District, with offices in Anchorage, serves the Native communities of Tatitlek and Chenega Bay as well as the mostly Caucasian town of Whittier. In addition, it also administers an extension school. In addition to the superintendent and teaching staff at each school, the district employs an assistant superintendent, a reading specialist, staff for the Anchorage House program, and two secretaries.

As the new superintendent searched for ways to bring community voice and involvement to life, he came across the Alaska Onward to Excellence (AOTE) program. AOTE provides a structure and process to actively engage communities in their children's education. During an interview, the superintendent remarked that the district "needed a model that would empower the communities and that would not be a top-down program." He secured grant funding for the process and began training with local leadership teams in 1995.

Even though AOTE was not necessarily seen as another program forced on the village from the district, the decision to go ahead with the program was not a village-based one. One community member said, "AOTE was brought in from the district and started in Tatitlek because the district wanted it to. . . . But it wasn't terribly foreign to the village." For villagers, AOTE was simply another part of the change process that started with the new staff. While they do not appear to resent being asked to go through the program, the fact that it was not a village decision may have negatively impacted the level of commitment and interest in AOTE as it advanced.

The AOTE village leadership team in Tatitlek consisted of one teacher and one community member who was quite active in the school. An elder/school board member

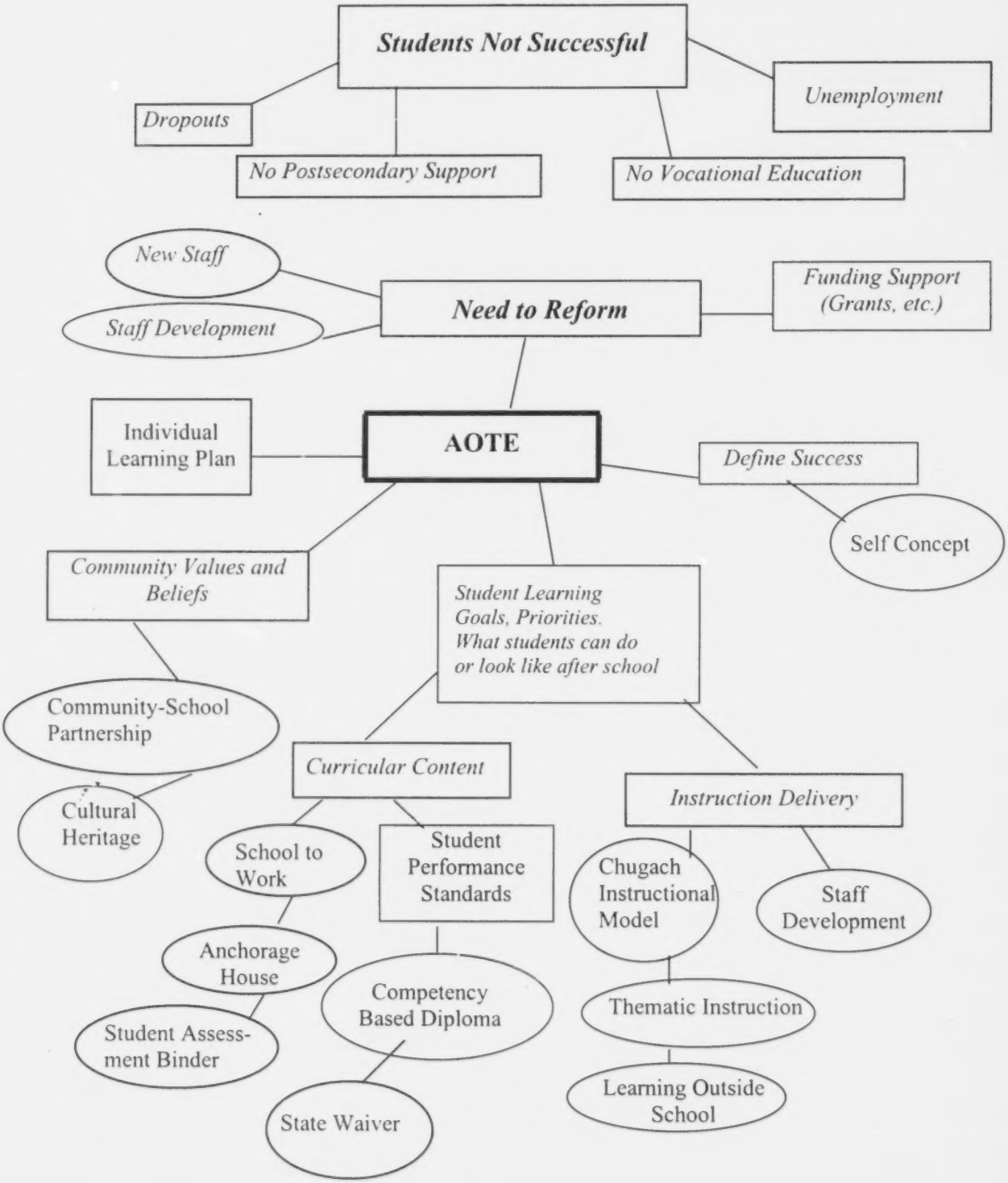
and the village chief served on the district-level leadership team. Initially, the AOTE process went quite well. Turnout at AOTE meetings was good and the process allowed a number of issues and concerns about student learning to emerge. Participants at the meetings were able to reach consensus on which of the district's goals it would focus on for the village. However, as it became clear that the AOTE process would require making decisions on how to reach those goals, participation dropped off. As one community member recalls, "It was difficult to get involvement because people didn't want to get up in front of the whole village and talk or give their opinions."

Despite this reluctance, AOTE community meetings did result in the selection of two broad goals for students:

1. Students will learn to set priorities and achieve personal, family, and community goals.
2. Students will develop the civic responsibilities, social and academic skills necessary to make a successful transition to life after school in a rural or urban environment.

During a team meeting for this research project, the district superintendent and research team members outlined their perceptions of what spurred reform in the district and how that effort progressed. This "map" of school reform efforts placed AOTE firmly in the center of the story, indicating that it was the springboard for many subsequent improvement efforts (see Figure 3). Although this map primarily represents the opinions of the superintendent, interview subjects tended to agree with the notion that all subsequent new programs, standards, assessments, and activities resulted from their participation in AOTE. The direction was set, the goals selected, and the superintendent given his framework for change. See Appendix C for a complete version of Chugach School District's vision and belief statements along with student learning goals.

Figure 3
Chugach School District Map of School Reform Efforts



With these as their marching orders, the district staff set out to develop curriculum, assessments, instructional strategies, and programs that would accomplish village goals. The changes to curriculum and instruction in the district over the past two years have been dramatic: schools have adopted a standards-based curriculum and assessment system, implemented new instructional models, changed to a standards-based report card, implemented new school-to-work programs, and begun a host of related efforts and programs. Each of the key elements of this change is described briefly below:

Chugach Instructional Model

This is a teaching approach that focuses instruction on progressing through four levels for every skill:

1. Drill and practice (traditional teaching, knowledge bits, five-step lesson plan, i.e., textbook and workbook).
2. Practical application (How will students use this? How is this important to them? i.e., reading directions, schedules).
3. Interactive (How do the students have control over their learning? i.e., simulate an event).
4. Real life connection (Learning is connected to real life, i.e., community project, Youth Area Watch).

All teachers in the district have attended in-services to learn how to design lessons using this model. Teachers report this as a complex process that may take them a while to master. During their in-services, the approach was first modeled by the district's assistant superintendent, whom teachers recognized as a "master teacher." The assistant superintendent has continued to work with teachers, and some sample lessons have been developed to help them in their lesson planning. The district superintendent defines the model as one that emphasizes "more caring and individual attention for the students and more learning outside of the classroom."

Anchorage House

This program was designed to provide village students with opportunities to receive skills training, explore after-graduation options, and apply their learning in real-

life situations. To accomplish this purpose, the district has purchased two houses in Anchorage at which village students stay while engaged in learning activities in the following areas: life skills, personal development, social development, service learning, urban familiarization, and career development. Activities are organized around exploration in five outcome areas: entrepreneurial, business, postsecondary education, service learning, and skilled trades. Students attend Anchorage House in phases, beginning with an exploration lasting just a few days and ranging to long-term stays for employment and further education. Appendix A provides a complete description of the Anchorage House program, including expectations at each phase.

Hands-on Learning

This approach to teaching is particularly important in a Native context, where traditional knowledge is passed down by showing youngsters how to do an activity then having them actually do it. According to University of Alaska researchers Kawagley and Barnhardt, traditional education processes were designed by "observing natural processes, adapting modes of survival, obtaining sustenance from the plant and animal world, and using natural materials to make their tools and implements. All of this was made understandable through thoughtful stories and demonstration (Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1997).

In addition to integrating hands-on learning into lessons in accordance with the Chugach Instructional Model, the school and district have participated in a number of projects that allow students hands-on experience with researchers and scientists. The Youth Area Watch, for example, makes science more connected to real life by giving students real research experiences. Students collect data on mussels, seals, and other local animals, take water samples, and gather meteorological data. They have also been able to board research vessels to see the labs and to learn measurement techniques. Besides the Youth Area Watch, students have compiled archeological information on local artifacts and produced a multimedia presentation for the Arctic Studies Center of the Smithsonian Institute; participated in studies of local fish and wildlife populations; and conducted many service learning projects to benefit the village.

Performance-Based Standards and New Standards-Based Assessments

The district has worked to generate a set of challenging standards to promote greater student learning. These standards are a move away from counting seat time as a way of ascertaining student competence. The district obtained a six-year state waiver in 1995 from traditional credit and report card requirements in order to completely transform the nature of schooling to a performance-based system. Standards have been developed K–12 for reading, writing, communication, personal development, social development, service learning, career development, cultural heritage, social sciences, science, technology development, and mathematics. All the standards are aligned with the new Alaska state standard or exceed the expectations thereof. See Figure 4 for an example of the new standards. A complete list of standards and key elements appears in Appendix B.

Figure 4
Sample Chugach School District Student Learning Standards

Science: Students will understand and apply major concepts and processes which are common to all of the sciences.

Key Elements:

- Use unifying concepts of cycle, change, equilibrium, model, systems, and order.
- Use the major processes of observation, hypothesizing, measuring, and classifying in scientific investigations.
- Identify the structures and properties of matter, including atoms, bonding, elements, and compounds.
- Describe chemical and physical changes.
- Explain the interaction of energy and matter.
- Describe the structure and functions of cells and their components at the molecular level.
- Explain the behavior and interdependence of organisms in their natural environments.
- Identify the structure and properties of earth and space.
- Explain the processes that change the earth and the solar system over time.

Along with these new standards, more relevant forms of assessment have been developed and introduced. Students are required to pass three assessments, at least one of which is provided by the district office, in order to progress from one level to the next. The assessments are a combination of authentic and traditional methodologies. When the

new statewide benchmarks and exit exams are implemented, Chugach students will participate in those assessments.

Each standard is clearly articulated so that students and teachers know exactly where they are in their learning and what they must do to progress. Report cards on student learning now indicate at what level a student is currently performing, and each area is marked as no effort, developing, proficient, or advanced at each level depending on the number of appropriate assessments the student has completed. See Figure 5.

Figure 5
Chugach School District Student Progress Report

CHUGACH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Student Progress Report

Name:
Teacher

Rating: * Advanced + Proficient
√ Developing - -No Effort

NOTICE TO PARENTS: This report provides a summary of your child's current achievement in the ten standard areas approved by the Chugach School District Board of Education. Please refer to the developmental report card for the content contained in each level of each standard/subject area.

			Quarters		Level: Rating		
Standard Areas	Graduation Minimum	Total Available	1	2	3	4	Comments
Mathematics	9	12					1st Quarter
Technology	8	11					
Reading	8	10					
Social Sciences	8	10					2nd Quarter
Writing	8	9					
Personal/Social/Health	8	9					
Career Development	7	9					3rd Quarter
Cultural Awareness	7	8					
Service Learning	4	5					
Science	3	4					4th Quarter
[redacted]							

5 OUTCOMES:

Post Secondary Education	Skilled Trades	Business	Entrepreneurial	Service/Learning
Community Colleges Universities	Vocational Training Centers	Retail, Food Service, Hospitality	Bed & Breakfast Charter Service	Military, Peace Corps, Homeless Shelters, Service Organizations

Individual Learning Plans (ILP)

Teachers, students, and parents together generate plans for each student in an effort to promote motivation and responsibility for learning. The process is specifically intended to help students set goals, establish the objectives, and then indicate how they will evaluate achievement of the goals. Both academic and personal goals are acceptable.

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Each quarter students and teachers identify student strengths and weaknesses, review student testing data, and work through a goal setting process. ILPs must be signed by student, teacher, an aide, and a parent. Implementation of ILPs serves to help students achieve one of the AOTE goals selected by the community.

Multi-Sensory Teaching Approach (MTA).

This is a linguistically based reading program that requires intensive student listening as a way to help them learn. MTA is based on the Orton-Gillingham method (phonetics-based but with additional emphasis on auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles). The district's overall reading program focuses on developing reading strategies that promote phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension. Students in all grades participate in MTA in various ways, but all are exposed first to the structure of language and then move on to reading. The district selected this approach as a way to quickly boost the reading levels of children in a culture that has not historically placed a strong emphasis on literacy.

Technology

The district's aim is to have enough computers for every student and to constantly upgrade its systems and software. The boom in technology necessitates ongoing teacher training and a continual search for affordable solutions to improving the technology infrastructure in the villages, many of which do not have access to e-mail, Internet, or two-way audio-visual capabilities. The village corporation, private industries, and the school district have all provided extensive hardware and software to Tatitlek Community School, but the remoteness of the site creates a number of technology challenges. Students receive extensive technology and Internet instruction at the district office while they are in Anchorage.

Study Variables

This report addresses two broad case study variables: How have recent school improvement efforts increased community voice and how have they improved student

experiences and learning. To address the second variable, the research in Tatitlek has been guided by the village's AOTE goals on developing student responsibility and ensuring success after high school. Because these goals were the focus for improvement in the village, their attainment is most relevant to the successful implementation of AOTE and school improvement.

Bringing AOTE Home: A Partial Success

One of the main goals of the Alaska Onward to Excellence school improvement process is to create a partnership between villages and their schools for the purpose of improving student learning. The main feature of this partnership is often working together to integrate Native knowledge, language, and tradition into the curriculum and practices of the school. In Tatitlek, AOTE did not surface the need for such a partnership perhaps as prominently as it has in other larger villages with stronger cultural roots and a more gaping rift between school and community. While greater cultural awareness and participation were concerns for Tatitlek villagers, their overriding priority was ensuring that their students had the wherewithal to be successful both in and outside the village.

AOTE enjoyed strong turnout at the beginning of the process. Parents, elders, community members, and high-school students attended a meeting hosted at the school by the village leadership team. Participants broke into groups to discuss what life in the village used to be like and how it had changed, and what school used to be like and how it had changed. The ultimate result of the meeting was a list of values and beliefs from the past that should be kept, including simplicity, competence in subsistence activities, and hard work. Aspects of school the villagers felt should be enhanced included providing more opportunities for kids to experience life outside the village, supporting kids with praise and encouragement, and being respectful. The next two meetings led the community through a process to determine attributes of successful students, consolidate values and beliefs, and write draft learning goals. Each of these was well attended by elders, parents, and community members. Review of AOTE meeting minutes and products indicates that the work produced by this group was meaningful and high quality, a good start for the process to take a strong hold in the community.

In reviewing notes from AOTE meetings, it is clear that student attendance was high, although students did not particularly remember or point to their participation during interviews. At first, teachers had to "insist" that students to come, but after a few meetings they began to attend meetings willingly as they came to understand that the outcome of these meetings could have an impact on their future experiences in school. As community participation waned, student voice became a critical component of setting the direction and planning for improvements at the school, at least in terms of their presence at meetings.

When it came time to write the AOTE action plan for Tatitlek, the number of people present to do the work dropped off dramatically. Aside from the community member/parent who was on the village leadership team, seven students, and three teachers, there were only two parents present. The group brainstormed a number of ideas for putting their student learning goals into action, worked through details and responsibilities, wrote the plan, and created an evaluation component to measure their level of implementation. A considerable amount of time and energy were put into the plan development, particularly by the two members of the village leadership team. However, due to the poor turnout at this event, many of the action steps were never taken, tasks were not assigned, awareness of the plan was very slight outside of the development group, and commitment to seeing it through in the community was virtually nil, even if there was general agreement to the principals and goals arrived at earlier in the process. Even so, many of the action steps were taken or are ongoing, but their connection to the AOTE goals and action plan is imprecise. A complete version of the action plan is included as Appendix D.

The district team reviewed the action plan in April of 1997 and made recommendations to increase student commitment (without giving specific recommendations), clarify community responsibilities, identify local resources for specific events, add evaluation/assessment for all tasks and activities, increase interactions with other schools, and strengthen the plan by addressing academics, civic responsibilities, and transition from rural to urban. Commenters also noted that most activities and assessments aligned with the learning goal, there was fairly good evidence and opportunity for increased student learning, and most components seemed

manageable. However, they did note that responsibility was heavily weighted on one or two stakeholders. In addition, they recommended a number of steps be taken to enhance the plan, engender community responsibility for implementing it, and improve the level of student learning.

Even as AOTE brought more community members into the school to voice their opinions, it is clear from the number and tone of the district team's suggestions that authentic participation in school decision making and activities, including reinforcement of high academic expectations and responsibility in the home, are still difficult ideas for this community to deal with. The list of recommendations includes ideas for soliciting greater input and requiring parents to assume greater responsibility for student learning. To this end, staff constantly make suggestions to parents and actively encourage their participation in their children's education. Additional ongoing attempts to bolster community ownership of their children's education, such as the community potluck at the beginning of the 1997–98 school year, include activities that focus on positive family attributes and collective community assets that meaningfully support student achievement. However, while these numerous efforts have been well directed, they have had little effect on changing behavior as intended. In fact, the burden of initiating and sustaining parent involvement falls squarely on the shoulders of the teachers rather than on parents.

While everyone interviewed generally felt that AOTE was a positive experience, the village leadership team members remembered some problems that occurred along the way. As noted above, it was quite difficult to turn people out for meetings after the first few. Outspokenness is not customary in the village and statements on behalf of the village to outsiders such as school personnel are generally the realm of the village chief or elders. Also, some community members, especially those without children in school, may have felt that they had little to contribute on issues concerning the school. Finally, there was a general feeling, as noted by leaders of the process, that the village would identify problems and goals, but it was the work of the district and the school to figure out how to make improvements and reach those goals. Once the direction was set, participants felt their job was done and their attention shifted to other matters. As one

involved community member remarked, "The priorities are different. We play up the action plan, while taking a steam bath often has priority over going to a meeting."

When asked how AOTE could have worked better in the village, one leadership team member had this to say: "We had to make a lot of modifications because we are such a small community. The same people had to wear a lot of different hats. But the biggest problem was that AOTE assumed people would be interested in doing all that reading and research. Not many in Tatitlek would do that kind of thing. . . .People don't generally read research in their spare time, or even know how. There were also a lot of terms that had to be translated and modified."

To improve the process, the superintendent recommends simplifying it further so that people do not think their role is too formal, that it requires educational expertise on their part, or that it will be too time consuming. "We walked the community through it or they might not have been willing. Because this is such a small community, a very small percentage of people carry the work load for a project like this."

Conclusion

In many ways, AOTE was both a great success and a keen disappointment in Tatitlek. On the up side, it succeeded in securing community participation in setting the direction for the school, a first in the history of this small Native community and its Western-style schools. The process helped forge a strong sense of trust between the community and the school staff as well as the superintendent. The importance of this trust and buy-in cannot be underestimated in this case, since they are the foundation for the radical changes occurring throughout the district. The smallness of the community and genuine concern of all its residents for its children contributed to good communication about AOTE and to good attendance at meetings, at least initially. For most Tatitlek residents, this was the important phase of the process and a huge step forward from their past relationship to the school.

On the other hand, AOTE did not reach its full potential in Tatitlek by creating tight, long-term community and parent partnerships that support student learning. In fact, the process essentially died out as it reached the phase of delegating activities and

responsibilities out of the classrooms and into the community in support of student success. Even attempts to get the village council to assume responsibility for arranging Cultural Heritage week have not worked. There was a general sense that Tatitlek residents will support anything that benefits their children, but the specifics of schooling and learning are the domain of the teachers. The AOTE process was not able to unseat this belief.

At least six factors seem to have contributed to the failure of sustaining AOTE beyond the initial direction-setting phase:

1. While AOTE did not inherently go against the grain of community values, it was a district-sponsored program rather than one the community decided to begin. There was little ownership of the process, even if the outcomes were supported.
2. There was a strong reluctance on the part of the community to interfere in what it considers "school affairs" or to assume expertise in educational matters.
3. Parents and community members began to see their children engaged in more interesting and relevant activities as new programs were implemented by the superintendent and district staff. This lead to an attitude of "why fix it if it isn't broken?"
4. The AOTE process may have been too formal to fit well with a close-knit community that approaches community decision making more casually than working by committee or attending scheduled meetings. It did not tap into the informal networks already in place in the village.
5. Governance in the village occurs mainly through one individual, the village chief, whom the community trusts to make good decisions and to look out for their well-being. The amount of trust for the school staff and superintendent may have encouraged them to take a similar approach (i.e., trust the district's "chief" to make good decisions). The village was simply not comfortable adding their ideas to the "chief's."
6. The process may have been too demanding, slow, or redundant for a small village with a bent toward harmony over conflict. AOTE participants reported "burnout" and "boredom" the further into the process they got.

Despite the short-lived nature of the program in Tatitlek, AOTE and subsequent reforms did impact the community and the school profoundly, albeit indirectly. The remainder of this report explores those impacts on improving community voice and student learning, the two ultimate outcomes of the AOTE design.

Finding Community Voice

"To know that this is what we used to live for is just amazing and unique in my eyes."

–Tatitlek Community School student

Determining whether "community voice" is present in Tatitlek Community School is a complex and difficult task. Does parent involvement in a one-week heritage celebration constitute community voice? Does community approval of the academic and extracurricular program mean that its culture and traditions are strongly represented? Must Native teachers with strongly developed instructional approaches be in the classroom to teach "in the traditional way?" "Voice" is, in a sense, a variable measured best by degrees. In Tatitlek's case, "voice" is expressed as a quiet approval of work underway based on feeling respected, valued, and having the needs of the community met.

Engendering Trust

Despite its practical limitations, AOTE did usher in some very positive changes in Tatitlek. Perhaps the greatest benefit was that it created an environment of trust and respect between district staff, teachers, and members of the community. Once concerns had been voiced, the superintendent and his staff set out to create an education system that would respond to these concerns. When programs such as Anchorage House were introduced, people in Tatitlek saw their children having positive experiences outside the village that were preparing them for life after high school. As the new standards came on line and were explained to parents, they began to see students engaged in more meaningful and difficult work. And, with the introduction of Cultural Heritage Week by

the new teachers, the village saw traditional knowledge being valued and integrated into the school program.

As described above, there is a high level of support for the superintendent and teachers, and all parents, community members, and students interviewed feel that they are faithful to the needs and expectations of the village and the students. In essence, AOTE provided a forum for villagers to sanction the district's work to improve schools. As superintendent Sampson says, "We have finally dispelled the myth that we want different things for our kids."

Perhaps most importantly, the village took an immediate liking to the new teaching couple who began at Tatitlek Community School in 1994. When the senior researcher asked the residents to describe any factors that have contributed to school change and improvement, most shared their viewpoints first and foremost on the importance of these particular teachers. Tatitlek residents' inclination was not to talk about programs but to describe the skills of individual teachers.

Here, for example, is what one of the elders said about the teachers: "Good teachers keep kids moving ahead. A good teacher grabs the kids, raises heck, and then loves them." This elder was quick to talk approvingly of Tatitlek's current teachers, citing their positive attitude and their dedication to promoting the local culture. He commented on their skills in working in the community, saying "Those Moores, they have the Native people figured out. They know how to work in a village, when to get involved, how to make things happen."

The village chief also attributed program improvements to changes in specific school staff. While he agreed that new programs provided by the district were right in line with the local interests and desires for education, he felt that the reasons why these programs have been successful was the commitment of the teaching staff: "Those new teachers worked hard and put tireless energy into promoting the programs." In retrospect, the chief said he wished that he had worked harder for better staff in the past.

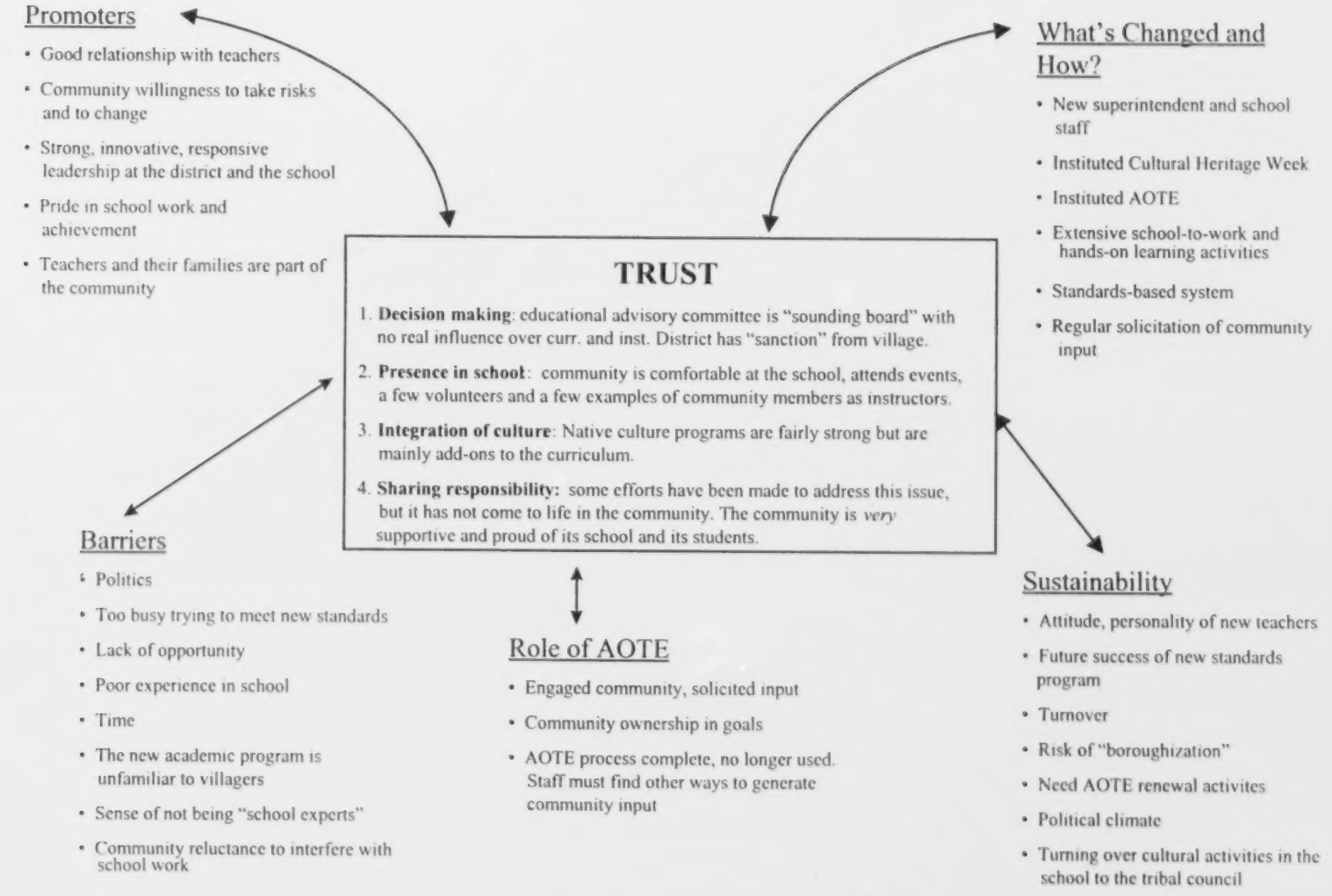
In one interview, a community member recalled the low level of trust between the community and the school in the past. When asked what had caused the changes, her immediate response was "the teachers. With the current teachers, the community and the school work together." Another community member expressed the viewpoint that, over

the course of time, "Community interest in and commitment to schooling fluctuates with the teachers and with the teachers' attitudes toward the Natives." She went on to contrast the current teachers with their predecessors: "The previous teachers kept to themselves. They did not allow their own children to play with the other kids in the village, and they themselves did not associate socially with the rest of the community. They called students stupid and hopeless. But the Moores have changed all of that. They value the Native lifestyle." From her perspective, the current teachers are seen as a part of the community because of their own interests and skills and because their own children intermingled easily with the Native children.

The high-school students interviewed during the site visits agreed that the current teachers were an important factor in changing education at Tatitlek school. When asked what is special about this school, the students cited the teachers and, like the other community members, contrasted the current teaching staff with their predecessors. "The previous teachers were here just for the money, but these teachers really try to meet our needs. If we tell them what we want, the teachers will try to get it arranged." When asked to provide an example of this, one student told about how when they requested more practical math, their teacher found new textbooks (the Chicago series) to "get us math that was more down to earth."

Trust is clearly a central factor in sparking and sustaining school reform efforts in Tatitlek. During a 1998 research team meeting for this study, the two village team members and the senior researchers developed a "map" of community voice in Tatitlek. All agreed that trust was the foundation for all the changes and for the possibility of keeping the momentum going in the future. This map is presented as Figure 6.

Figure 6
Community Voice in Tatitlek


Promoters
• Good relationship with teachers
• Community willingness to take risks and to change
• Strong, innovative, responsive leadership at the district and the school
• Pride in school work and achievement
• Teachers and their families are part of the community
What's Changed and How?
• New superintendent and school staff
• Instituted Cultural Heritage Week
• Instituted AOTE
• Extensive school-to-work and hands-on learning activities
• Standards-based system
• Regular solicitation of community input
TRUST
1. Decision making: educational advisory committee is "sounding board" with no real influence over curr. and inst. District has "sanction" from village.
2. Presence in school: community is comfortable at the school, attends events, a few volunteers and a few examples of community members as instructors.
3. Integration of culture: Native culture programs are fairly strong but are mainly add-ons to the curriculum.
4. Sharing responsibility: some efforts have been made to address this issue, but it has not come to life in the community. The community is very supportive and proud of its school and its students.
Barriers
• Politics
• Too busy trying to meet new standards
• Lack of opportunity
• Poor experience in school
• Time
• The new academic program is unfamiliar to villagers
• Sense of not being "school experts"
• Community reluctance to interfere with school work
Role of AOTE
• Engaged community, solicited input
• Community ownership in goals
• AOTE process complete, no longer used. Staff must find other ways to generate community input
Sustainability
• Attitude, personality of new teachers
• Future success of new standards program
• Turnover
• Risk of "boroughization"
• Need AOTE renewal activites
• Political climate
• Turning over cultural activities in the school to the tribal council

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Community Approval

This new sense of trust for teachers has lead to strong approval for the structural changes to the academic program set forth by the district administration. Interview data suggest that the district's current priorities and programs continue to enjoy widespread endorsement from community members, parents, and students. In addition a community survey conducted at a school celebration potluck in October 1997 confirms a high degree of agreement with the district work. Following is a synopsis of the survey findings in this area.

Community Survey

- Generally, Tatitlek residents concur about what educational priorities should be. All respondents to the survey agreed that computers and technology were a important focus for the school. Parents and elders in the community also felt that life skills (defined in this context as critical thinking, decision making, being a responsible citizen, knowing how to deal with change, continuing to learn after leaving school, and social skills) were also very important areas of school focus. Students tended to give less weight to these life skill issues, particularly responsible citizenship and knowing how to deal with change. There is a strong agreement amongst all sectors of the community that both exploring career options and receiving specific job training are important elements of schooling. Interestingly, opinions about the importance of teaching the arts, history, and geography was split, with students preferring to give these areas little or no emphasis, and parents believing they deserve at least some stressing.
- When asked to prioritize the outcomes of education, the Tatitlek community focused again on developing those immediate skills for the workplace and adulthood relevant to their context. There was agreement that learning how to take responsibility, learning the basics of reading and writing, and learning skills that will help them get a job were vital outcomes. Interestingly, parents more often chose job skills and responsibility as important than they did learning to read and write. Learning to communicate and get along with others did not rank high among community priorities in general, which may be a result of the closeness of the small village. The kids in particular are very open and intimate with each other.

However, the parents cited the last two outcomes listed on the survey (communication and getting along) as often as they did reading and writing.

- The community seemed relatively unconcerned about state involvement or control over Tatitlek school at this point, confirming the sense of satisfaction and faith that the school is on the right track (although this view seemed to change some as controversial statewide legislation cutting funding to rural schools was debated). During my visits to Tatitlek and conversations with parents and elders I never heard a strong criticism or concern about the educational program. While parents on occasion questioned a particular incident involving their children or wanted to see a stronger emphasis in certain areas, they never blamed the teachers or the district and were quick to qualify that they thought the teachers were doing a fantastic job with the kids.

Sharing Responsibility

Tatitlek parents and community members are active supporters of their children's education in many ways: they give generously of time and money to ensure students can travel and participate in outside events. They provide strong emotional support for children's academic development and are deeply proud, especially of students' learning Native life ways. In essence, they have accepted the role of vocal cheerleader for their kids.

Responsibility for student learning and success, however, is not so clearly shared between the school and the community. As stated earlier, there is a general feeling that schooling is the realm of the school. Teachers at Tatitlek Community School feel that parents generally listen when they suggest ways for families to help support their children's learning, but that follow-through is inconsistent and minimal. Families with a predisposition to supporting learning outside of the classroom respond well to suggestions, but the community has yet to take up the cause as a whole.

The notion of shared accountability for student learning and success is very underdeveloped in Tatitlek. In conversations with parents and community members, there was more generally an acceptance of children as they are, and while everyone wants the best for their kids, they seem unwilling to push them to excel. I had a feeling this was a cultural norm that was unlikely to change quickly. Students rarely seemed to suffer strong discipline for their actions.

Decision Making

While the work of the school and the district is well supported among villagers, survey results indicate that adults in the village have a desire to be more actively engaged in making decisions concerning the school and their children's education. Given the difficulty of sustaining high levels of involvement during AOTE, itself a decision-making process, these findings are very surprising.

In addition, the survey revealed that the match between how much people *are* involved in decision making, how much they *should be* involved, and how much they *would like to be* involved is not strong. Few take the time to participate in advisory or decision-making capacities in their present form. What is not clear is whether another format for decision making would be more productive. Most adult respondents expressed the desire to take a more active role individually in making decisions at the school while also reporting satisfaction with the amount of community voice in school decision making.

Since the AOTE cycle has come to an end, the Education Advisory Committee (EAC) is Tatitlek Community School's only formal forum for gathering community input on school activities and policies. The head teacher uses this three-person group as a "sounding board" for such issues as the school calendar, facilities use, and some budget and policy issues. One member of the three-person EAC said she would like to have more direct involvement in decisions, but their job is mainly to help the teachers coordinate their schedules and work. The head teacher in Tatitlek said it was difficult to fill the seats on this committee. Every year the school secretary has to go door to door and badger people to participate. In the end, those who are already active in school fill seats on the committee.

There are two Tatitlek elders who sit on the Chugach District School Board, which oversees Tatitlek Community School, Whittier Community School, Chenega Bay Community School, and the Chugach Extension School. They are active participants, but interview data reveal that the board is not heavily involved in policy setting and governance. There is general consensus that the board would step in and force change if the direction the school or district was heading was out of alignment with community desires. This not being the case at present, the decision-making authority of the board is minimally exercised, and most decisions that affect the curricular and instructional programs in the district are made by the superintendent.

The combination of feeling like school and district staff are working in the best interest of the village children and a perceived lack of "technical expertise" in education may be hampering villagers' participation in school decision making. There is little incentive to get more active when all is going well. Concurrent change to a standards-based system may make it even more difficult since these assessment approaches are even less familiar. Alternately, there may not be an appropriate body or vehicle for meaningful involvement in place. While appearances suggest that involvement structures are present and participation is encouraged, formal structures may not be a productive approach in this culture or with this particular group of people.

Cultural Integration into Everyday Life at School

The level of district responsiveness and sensitivity to community concerns and values has increased dramatically since the personnel changes in 1994. Students in Tatitlek now have a number of opportunities to experience the traditions, values, and norms of their Native culture during the school year and must progress through four levels of a district Cultural Heritage Standard over the course of their school career. These opportunities and expectations for students to participate in their Native culture mark a dramatic shift away from schools being a place to acculturate Native children to Western ways of thinking, learning, and living. It also marks a change for the community as a whole, which had long since "forgotten" its traditional Native songs, dances, and many ceremonies (McClintock Land Survey and Planning Co., 1989). Following is a brief description of the ways in which Native culture has infiltrated the traditionally Western curriculum and schedule.

Cultural Heritage Week

The notion of a reserved, extended period of time in which students can explore their traditional culture did not stem from village initiative. Instead, it was an idea brought to the village by the two new teachers, Dennis and Penny Moore. The result has been a reintroduction of villagers, especially students, to their history and heritage. It is the first such effort in Tatitlek to bring communities from the region together to learn from each other and celebrate their common past.

Cultural Heritage Week takes place at the end of each school year. A week of the school calendar is set aside for the event, and the village is filled with students, families, teachers, and experts from around Prince William Sound. Activities during the week include language instruction, skin sewing, building traditional dwellings, dancing, singing, beading, and other traditional crafts. For most students, this is a favorite time of year. As one student wrote for an end-of-the-year reflection on the event, "A week of learning our heritage and experiencing, first hand, Native stuff. . . . What a rush! To know that this is what we used to live for is just amazing and unique in my eyes."

Sugcestun

The Native tongue of Tatitlek, Sugcestun, is a dying language. There are only three living speakers of the language in the village, and even they do not speak it to each other. Although federal Indian Education dollars sponsor teaching of basic Sugcestun words in the school, there is not currently a language program or curriculum that will ensure fluency or even survival. Chugachmiut, the regional Native cultural association, has employed one young woman from Tatitlek to interview remaining speakers of the language and assist in developing a curriculum. But, as speakers become fewer, the chances of true literacy in the local language grow slimmer.

Subsistence

Subsistence is still a major part of daily living in Tatitlek. Fishing, seal hunting, duck hunting, trapping, etc. are common activities for village men to engage in and the takings are shared among the entire village. The skills and knowledge necessary to continue a partially subsistence-based culture and economy are generally passed down informally outside of the school or through such events as Cultural Heritage Week or Nuuciq, a Native youth summer Spirit Camp. While it continues to be important to all villagers, further environmental devastation in Prince William Sound along with far reaching potential political changes in Native subsistence rights could ultimately impinge on local food sources enough to make subsistence impossible. There has been little or no effort at Tatitlek school to make subsistence skills a part of the curriculum.

Crafts

Opportunities to learn local arts and crafts such as skin sewing, carving, mask making, and beadwork are provided during Cultural Heritage Week, Nuuciq Summer Spirit Camp, Indian education classes devoted to these skills, or to informal instruction in the home.

Place-Relevant Learning

Tatitlek teachers and outside organizations have made many efforts to create meaningful opportunities for children to learn in a place-oriented context. For example, the Youth Area Watch is a long-term research experience in which students gather data about local wildlife and fauna. Students can directly apply their learning to their home context. There have been numerous collaborations between students and other outside research agencies such as the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, which has done research on subsistence patterns and duck populations with village students. The Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center worked with students to catalogue archaeological artifacts from the region. The students wrote descriptions of the use and history of each tool then built an interactive CD-ROM that contains all the information. While this project was a very good marriage of cultural learning and technology application, it is not currently being used by younger children in the village to learn about their culture. There is not even a copy on file at the school, and most students had never seen the presentation. This was quite surprising given the amount of work devoted to the project a few years ago and its potential value as a teaching tool.

Cultural Heritage Standard

As part of the standards-based reform ushered in by the new superintendent, cultural heritage took its place next to reading, writing, and math as an important outcome of schooling. Competencies range from understanding the basic tenets of culture to interpreting the impact of events on local Native culture and application of local Native language. While recognition of the importance of Native values and traditions is a major step forward for Tatitlek School, I generally felt this standard to be the thinnest and least developed of the 12 new standards. From the point of view of the superintendent, the standards developed from concerns raised by the AOTE process. However, they were not developed specifically with local experts and elders, nor with specific skill outcomes such as those in the reading or math standards.

When speculating on why this standard was comparatively underdeveloped in comparison to the other standards, the head teacher ventured that it was because of the district's overall demographics, which are about 50 percent Native, 50 percent white, with two primarily Native schools, one primarily white school, and an extension correspondence school for students in even more remote places. This diversity makes comprehensive development of a culture-specific standard problematic on a districtwide level.

The degree to which Native Alutiiq culture is present in the day-to-day instruction at Tatitlek School is difficult to ascertain. There is no strongly developed "Native way" of teaching in the village, local instructional resources are very limited, and the language and culture in Tatitlek are in jeopardy of disappearing not only from the school, but also from the community as a whole. These issues make the teaching of culture more a one-shot event or add-on to the curriculum than an integral part of it. Despite limitations, strong progress has been made in validating students' experiences and identity by introducing a celebration of heritage, making forays into language acquisition, and participating in area projects that emphasize a sense of place.

Community Presence in the School

Tatitlek residents support their children and their children's broader education in a variety of ways, from significant financial contributions to supportive cultural mores. For example, the local parents twice contributed over $20,000 to sponsor their children on a European trip in 1996 and again in 1998.

Community support is more than money—it is also psychological. Repeatedly during the interviews, the positive attitude that community members have toward the students surfaced. One parent described the village way of raising children as giving "lots of acknowledgement and praise for the children. With all that praise, the kids become proud of who they are. Kids feel accepted in the village—being a member of this community becomes your identity—it is a part of who you are." She went on to say that it is not just parents who praise and reinforce children. "The elders make a point of providing a lot of positive feedback to all the kids." Interviews with the elders confirmed this attitude. One elder was quick to describe the students as "smart kids" and another described the children in town as "good kids." He proudly told a story from one of

the European trips when the students from Tatitlek were praised as being the best behaved, clearly proud of the way that students were respectful of adults.

While they sincerely believe that Tatitlek students are bright and capable and while they provide emotional and financial support for them, Tatitlek residents rarely visit the school to be involved in instruction. Pictures of elders hang on the wall above the students' coats, but elders very rarely come to teach customs or language in the classroom. Community members are quite willing to attend events and contribute food for potlucks, but their turnout is far better for social events and student dancing than it is for decision-making meetings such as AOTE. Teachers make great efforts to involve elders and others in activities and lessons with students, but there is not a thorough integration of curriculum with traditional Native ways, nor a true sharing of teaching among community members. In general, they are very comfortable observers, but reluctant participants. They are enthusiastic supporters of their kids, but prefer to leave teaching to the teachers.

The main exception to this general lack of authentic involvement is during Cultural Heritage Week, when elders are invited to teach classes. According to one elder, "our eight elders have been asked to teach the Native culture and the subsistence life ways. Teachers have told the students to come down to our houses and interview us." Teachers often try to involve elders and the community in innovative ways, but still struggle with making too many demands on elders and "burning them out on the school." Students visiting elders' homes to learn from them may be a tangible change, but it is not always a welcome one.

Conclusion: Community Voice

Tatitlek residents are proud of their school and of their children and provide a great deal of material and psychological support for students. At the same time, there is little evidence of authentic local voice interwoven into the day-to-day life of the school. There are a number of possible explanations for this phenomenon. Among these are the fact that this culture is less intact than others: the language is nearly lost, there has been heavy Russian and other Western influence and suppression of culture, the subsistence lifestyle is still present but is now mostly a choice more than a necessity, there may be a cultural inclination not to speak out or rock the boat, and there may be reluctance to tread into others' realm of expertise, either out of respect or

because people's own school experience was so poor. Yet another possibility is that parents really want to see their children schooled in Western ways so that they can be successful outside the village, even if they do have a difficult time watching their children leave.

It is critical here to note that, while involvement and level of "voice" in the school as viewed through the criteria of this researcher and this study was not readily visible or significant, Tatitlek residents feel they have a strong presence and voice in the school and that this change has been among the greatest achievements of the various reform efforts. While school improvement as understood by the district is embodied in the new instructional and structural changes, the concept of ongoing school improvement is much less familiar to the community members. The changes most frequently cited by the community during interviews were the new staff and the resulting increases in cultural studies. The elders in particular recognize that they have been asked to participate more in the formal education process. According to one elder, the renewed emphasis on cultural heritage is a "180-degree turnaround" from 40 or 50 years ago when these elders attended school. When they were children, they were forced to give up their culture and were even punished for speaking their languages. Given the circumstances of history, it is not surprising that a responsive, sensitive staff that actively pursues the inclusion of Native culture in schooling is among the most important improvement in schooling this village has ever seen.

Regardless of the limitations of community voice in the school, there are considerable efforts being made, both in and out of the classroom, to reintegrate traditional activities into the lives of the children. Cultural Heritage Week, language instruction, Native dancing, arts and crafts, Nuuciq summer camp, and language curriculum development are all indicators that people are interested in revitalizing the culture even as they move into a closer connection with the world outside the village. But, as one teacher remarked, these efforts take considerable time, commitment, and expertise on the part of village elders and experts. It will be a long time before any of these projects are completely implemented and even longer before we can gauge their impact on students. In the meantime, kids continue to struggle with retaining their traditional culture and being part of the larger world outside.

Lessons

- AOTE can be a powerful tool for clearing the air between school and community, especially when brought on simultaneously with a new administration or teachers.
- A new approach to sustaining community involvement in decision making must be created to revive it after the initial direction-setting process is complete. This was the strongest phase of AOTE in Tatitlek and the one with the greatest impact on integrating community voice.
- Pride in Native culture and in children does not equal activism in school. The barriers to true community ownership and involvement extend beyond enhancing the trust level or bridging cultural differences. It means creating entirely new habits and frames of mind about learning and responsibility. In a community entirely unacquainted with authentic or meaningful involvement in school, this is a truly foreign notion.
- AOTE needs to focus on helping villagers understand the difference between learning and schooling. While the technical aspects of schooling may be best left to professionals, student learning should be the realm of everyone in the greater school community.
- In addition to better articulation of the learning/schooling difference, AOTE would do well to help define "responsibility" for student learning. By delineating what this means for students, teachers, parents, and community members, the process might lead to better acceptance of mutual responsibility by all.

Improving Students' Experience in School

"My dream is to see the seven Wonders of the World and to follow my own rainbow."

–Tatitlek Community School student

As important as community voice is to sustaining partnerships and cooperation with the school, the ultimate aim of any school improvement process is to make school a better place for kids and to help them excel in their learning. What impact have these changes and reforms at the Chugach School District had on student learning? How have student experiences changed? How do students feel about the changes? What impact are they having on teachers and their instructional practices? These questions get to the heart of Tatitlek's school improvement story.

To establish the habits of mind, discipline, and "street-smarts" necessary for village students to thrive outside their home towns required a dramatic and highly experimental overhaul of the education system and customs that had held kids back from their potential in the past. First, it meant determining new standards by which to hold students accountable. These standards were set high to ensure that a village education no longer implied a substandard education and to articulate expectations and curriculum so that students and teachers would become more aware of where and how learning was occurring for each student. It also meant creating opportunities for students to gain exposure to life outside the village, to learn employment and higher-education skills, and to make well-informed decisions. And, it meant preparing teachers to effectively realize these radical new notions of teaching and learning. While implementation has been a rocky road for teachers and for some students, evidence is beginning to accumulate that points to the effectiveness of these strategies in improving student learning and experiences.

New Student Learning Standards

The Chugach School District performance-based standards were introduced to the district during the 1995–1996 school year, shortly after the direction-setting phase of AOTE. With performance assessment tied directly to the standards, the school can distinguish between those who are performing well and those who are just squeezing by. The end result, effective the 1997–1998 school year, is a competency-based diploma, awarded to graduating students only after successful progression through the standards and assessments.

For students, the new performance-based system has meant a fundamental change in business as usual. They have had to take on a greater level of responsibility for their own learning, demonstrate their ability before progressing, and purposefully engage in a number of new competency areas such as service learning, character development, and career development. These changes have not been pain-free. At the beginning of the implementation of the new system in October 1997, students felt confused and overwhelmed by the standards. During a focus group interview, students said "Mr. Moore has tried to explain those [standards] to us but they were too complex for us students to understand. He took each one on the list and tried to make it be understandable to us kids, but I don't really know what they mean. But I think they

[the teachers and the district staff] are working on that. They really need to make them more simple." Until the standards were seen in action—as high-stake gateways to graduation—they held little meaning for most students.

New standards translated into high anxiety for the three girls in the senior class of 1998. For them standards became a barrier to graduation, one they were not at all sure they could hurdle. The girls expressed frustration that the new standards had been "sprung on them" a year earlier than originally scheduled. They were surprised with the new requirement at the beginning of the school year and had no time to prepare for it. They all expressed the disappointment of having to work really hard their senior year when it should have been the time for them to "relax a little." They felt it was unfair for the superintendent not to discuss his plan to implement a year early. The girls also felt it was unfair that, as of October 1997, they had not yet gotten any word of their progress toward those standards yet this year so they did not have a sense of how much work they had left to do. The three said they understood the standards fairly well, but they did not really know how they would "work" when it came time for graduation and report cards. All of these feelings of nervousness were exacerbated by teacher and parent concerns about exactly how the standards would work.

While most parents were, in principle, highly supportive of the performance-based system, there was widespread confusion about the new reporting system, which showed student achievement based on progress through standards. The superintendent and the teachers explained the new system at general village AOTE meetings and in private conferences with parents. Nevertheless, the system did not make intuitive sense to villagers. On many of the standards, such as science and cultural heritage, there are only a few levels K–12, which makes monitoring of student progress difficult for parents since they may go two or more years without seeing their children move from one level to the next. As one parent remarked, "I liked the ability to know the grades the kids were getting and I don't think the [new] report cards give very good information." This concern among the community was echoed by a local school board member, who said she had gotten a lot of questions about why the students couldn't just have grades. Others complained that they no longer knew how to reward their children for good performance at school.

These reports of discontent in the community were contradicted by survey data that indicated parents learned most about how their students were doing from sources other than

report cards. In the survey, parents and elders responded to the question "What gives you the most information about how your child is doing in school?" Only one parent responded that grades gave the most information about his/her children's progress, while five said grades provided a little information. Eight parents reported that they got a lot of information by talking to the teacher, seeing the kind of work their child was doing, and watching students in the classroom. The two responding elders indicated that they only got a little information from looking at grades. One reported talking to the teacher as providing a little information while the other said teachers were not a good source for information. Both felt that looking at student work provided a lot of information. The two were split on how much they learned by watching students in the classroom.

Concern over understanding report cards was not the only frustration with the new standards system. Although I never heard complaint during my interviews, a few community members and parents did report that some other parents were concerned their children were working too hard, a notion likely left over from the days of less rigorous academic expectations for Native students. Despite these concerns, the majority of parents and elders I interviewed continued to support the district's moving quickly on the standards.

For teachers, the switch to a performance-based system has created the need to retool their instructional and assessment techniques, a process that has caused no small amount of stress and extra work for them. The head teacher, a long-time veteran of teaching in rural Alaska, said "I feel like a first year teacher again." The new standards system brings with it a new approach to monitoring student work, a new and multifaceted instructional model, creation of individual learning plans, multiple new assessments, development of new curricular and assessment materials, teaching new content areas, articulating standards and levels into practical lessons, learning new technology, dealing with students out of class for extended periods as they attend Anchorage House or other school-related functions, and an increased need for high levels of communication with the parents and the community.

Teachers have felt the demands of the new system acutely in the amount of time now dedicated to assessment. All teachers agreed they had very little time to spend on planning high-quality lessons. Notes one,

> We are truly getting stressed to the breaking point with getting this stuff implemented. We work all the time: every weekend, every night, every morning to get up to speed; write, plan, and interpret the necessary assessments; plan instruction according to the Chugach Instructional Model; meet everyone's social and emotional needs; and juggle all the events going on at the school. It's just an amazing amount of work.

Parents in the village have noticed the dedication and time commitment with which the teachers have approached their new tasks and were highly complimentary and thankful for the teachers' efforts.

The district, for all its haste in getting reform implemented, has provided a good deal of technical and emotional support to teachers, students, and parents as they make the transition. In-services are frequent, specialists visit the village often, and district staff go to great lengths to communicate the changes and to offer support to teachers. When I asked whether they were prepared well enough to implement all the new reforms, one teacher responded:

> Oh, boy. Yeah, I'm ready to go and we're going for it. As for "adequately prepared". . . the district has done all they could to help us. But they've really thrown us in the furnace along with themselves as far as getting the standards going. And we feel the heat strongly. We could have been prepared better by slowing it down and the district is, I think, just going for it. It's okay. I feel comfortable. I'm doing the best I can.

The problems with rapid implementation of systemic change of this kind do not fall on deaf ears at the district office. There is a recognition of the stress teachers are finding themselves under. Still, there is a prevailing attitude that it is better to jump in with both feet and get it all done.

On my next visit to the village (May 1998), although student anxiety over the new standards had diminished significantly, teacher stress remained quite high. Teachers frequently felt that they were cheating kids of instructional time and individual attention by spending so much energy on assessment; they felt their tempers were short and that they spent more time trying to get kids through the standards than they did meeting kids' emotional and academic needs; and they were having difficulty interpreting some of the district-developed assessments they were required to give their students. One teacher showed me a sample of an assessment

question so difficult to interpret I could not have answered it myself, let alone expected much younger students to do so.

Despite the continuing pressure experienced by teachers, by May 1998 students had thoroughly adjusted to the new system. In fact, those interviewed mostly felt they had benefited from the rigorous new standards. The high-school focus group participants agreed that they felt pretty good about where they have been with the standards. They believe that the system makes it easier because they know where they are and what they need to do. The three seniors, all of whom passed the standards and earned diplomas in 1998, grew to be very comfortable with the standards as the year progressed:

> They were hardest to deal with at the beginning of the year. We weren't very motivated and didn't really think passing them was possible. And they were really hard to understand. Now, we have the swing of things and I think the standards system is a better (although harder) way to do school. We know what we are supposed to do and can work at our own speed. I still don't appreciate being the district's guinea pigs for this year. . . . I really learned a lot this year, even more than in all my previous years in school. And it was more fun.

As one indicator of success, two of the graduating seniors of 1998 have enrolled in the University of Alaska Fairbanks, while the third has enrolled in community college in Valdez. Villagers are feeling pleased with these results as indication that their goals are being met and the school is doing a good job.

Teachers and staff have noticed changes in the way kids are learning as a result of the new system, especially at the high-school level. Once kids in the higher grades understand the system, they are able to "take more control over what and whether they learn," according to Superintendent Sampson. One teacher discussed students' having to take initiative and responsibility to ensure they covered all the subject matter they needed to pass the standard. This has meant much more project-based learning, both individually and in groups. Because the Chugach Instructional Model calls for an emphasis on hands-on and real-world learning, students have also gained practical exposure to subject matter quite differently than through the familiar model of desk time and textbook learning. The independence required of students to traverse the standards works well at the high-school level where kids generally have the maturity to be self-

directed. In this situation, the role of the teacher is more that of a resource person or learning facilitator than it is a traditional teacher.

My classroom observations lead me to believe that there is tremendous potential for high-school students to excel using the new performance-based model and the supporting programmatic activities. In fact, some older students are working well beyond their expected level and express a lot of satisfaction with their progress and their ability to structure their learning in this manner. Also, some students who faltered and expressed doubt in the beginning had undergone a huge transformation in their attitudes toward learning. Conversely, there was still an observable attitude amongst many of "how much do I have to do to get the standard done," a sentence I heard a number of times on my visit. The success of the standards system will ultimately lie in whether or not students begin to embrace the notion of learning for learning's sake rather than merely jumping through hoops for a diploma.

Middle and elementary-age students present a quite different picture of the transformation to a performance-based system. Whereas in the high school, students can gain the skills to be self-directed and self-assessing, lower maturity levels in the younger grades demand a much higher degree of teacher attention to student progress and needs. These tasks become a huge juggling act even in a small classroom, since each child is working at a different pace, on different assessments, and with different learning needs. Strategies that were formerly used, such as lecture-style teaching, are no longer appropriate to comply with the Chugach Instructional Model or to meet kids where they are in the process of learning a subject. Teachers in these classrooms were stretched observably thin and rushed from student to student and subject to subject in order to meet the diverse needs of their students.

Home Away From Home

Elders, parents, community members, and students all hold a common belief in the importance of learning experiences outside the village. From the lessons of the past, they know that students frequently exposed to external environments have a better likelihood of succeeding economically and personally beyond the confines of the village. They also believe that such experiences must extend beyond mere exposure to the outside world to include experiences living, working, and coping in urban environments.

Anchorage House

The Chugach School District's Anchorage House has been a major component of the district's reform agenda. The program allows village students to leave home, gain experience in an urban environment, develop social and decision-making skills, and explore their options for further learning and employment after they leave high school. Superintendent Sampson stated the ultimate goal of the program as having every student actively engaged in one of the five outcome areas (entrepreneurship, business, postsecondary education, service learning, and skilled trades) by the time they graduate. There are currently five phases of the Anchorage House program, starting in middle school with phase 0, a rudimentary introduction to the program, and progressing through phase 4, which consists of an extended stay where the student works, studies, lives semi-independently, and experiences living outside the village for long stretches of time.

Students and parents alike were uniformly excited about the Anchorage House program and the experiences kids were having there. One elder said she thought kids were learning how to take responsibility better. During interviews, a few young adults in the community who graduated before the days of Anchorage House expressed regret that they were not able to participate and thought the experience was highly beneficial for students. The village chief said he felt it was one of the best changes brought in by the new superintendent.

Student perspectives on Anchorage House are more varied, although most admit to having benefited from the program in the long run. In 1996, its first year of operation, there were programmatic bugs that had to be worked out. For example, students complained of having too much busy-work and not enough free time, they felt they were over-monitored much of the time, and they easily became homesick during phase 2, which was originally a whole month long. Some parents also tearfully admitted to missing their children terribly during this phase. Program staff made adjustments to the program as they went along and seem to have smoothed out most of the wrinkles. Some other students complained at first that it was too much hard work or that it was boring. Yet another said that they only reason she went was because it was easier to pass the district standards at Anchorage House than it was at home.

Despite complaints at the beginning, Tatitlek students gradually began to feel that their experience at Anchorage House was fun, lots of hard work, and very beneficial. One graduating

senior said of the experience, "There was so much I didn't know about, especially social skills and dealing with the city, that we learned about at Anchorage House. I am really thankful for it." Another remarked, "It's pretty hard. You get tired of all the things you have to do, but we all recognize that it's important and we need the skills so we go and make the best of it." Other high-school students interviewed said they had learned a lot about postsecondary education, vocational training, and generally about life after high school "so it's not a shock and we have a head start on everyone else."

> Everything we do helps us to get closer to graduation levels. After graduation, however, I hope it does the same. Right now I don't really feel prepared to graduate—that's why I'm thankful for Anchorage House and all it's doing for me. I know the more I continue with Anchorage House, the better I'll be prepared for life after high school.

Students from Tatitlek had a wide range of experiences at Anchorage House over the course of the last two years. Most middle-school students completed the introductory phase 0, while the graduating seniors and one younger high-school student progressed through phase 3 (district staff called these girls the "Pioneer Princesses" since they were the first to complete the program through this phase). Each of these older students in phase 3 had practical, entry-level job experience as well as the opportunity to visit job sites of their choice (e.g., SeaLife Center, veterinary clinic, elementary classroom, and local Native cultural association). The younger student plans to "get hooked up with an abstract photographer" on her next stay at Anchorage House.

The program is overseen by district staff and has a special "private sector evaluation team" made up mostly of non-educators to lend perspective on the educational requirements of the postsecondary and business worlds. The team helps the district know if they are hitting the mark with their life skills and school-to-work programs. At this writing the team had not made a formal report on the effectiveness of the program but had given oral feedback to the superintendent. According to him, the team was highly complementary of the Anchorage House program, saying it was "miles ahead" of other, similar school-to-work efforts. A few of the companies represented on the team are offering students challenging worksite learning opportunities in their places of business.

The Anchorage House program is a highly promising way to give students exposure to their postsecondary options and to help them develop the social, emotional, and decision-making skills necessary for them to flourish outside the village. Because of the small number of students who have completed the program, it will be a number of years before its true impact can be assessed. The district does not have a formal program or individual evaluation plan for Anchorage House in place, so evidence of success, while readily apparent among the few "graduates," is mainly anecdotal.

Other Learning Opportunities

In the past, Tatitlek students had the option of leaving the village only to attend boarding schools far away. Now, students are able to leave the village to engage in specific learning activities but maintain a close academic and social connection with their home school. This is a critically important distinction between the exploratory nature of the current programs and the forced removal of students in the past: these programs leave students a wide range of choices to determine their interests, talents, and goals. Hands-on learning outside of the village gives students much needed exposure to these options and helps them see possibilities for work in either urban or village settings.

Tatitlek students had a host of opportunities in addition to Anchorage House to participate in projects or activities outside of the village. During this research study students participated in the Youth Area Watch program, an archaeology and technology program with the Arctic Studies Center, Fish and Wildlife Service subsistence and duck studies, community-sponsored trips to Europe, and countless other activities. Each of these is intended to expand students' horizons and open their eyes to other options.

However, despite the best intentions of program designers and staff, I saw little evidence that these projects had been integrated into regular classroom work. For example, students regularly collected data on mussels from a bed outside the village as part of their participation in Youth Area Watch. Rather than entering, graphing, and analyzing the data in a statistics lesson, they merely sent the data off to a sponsoring agency and never had the opportunity to interact with it or learn the results. Such integration techniques would provide the students with a much more comprehensive real-life experience.

Quality of School Life Scale

Eighteen Tatitlek students aged 9 through 18 took a student attitude survey adapted from the Quality of School Life Scale (Epstein and McPartland, 1977). The first survey administration occurred in December 1997 but was repeated in April 1998 because no high-school aged males were surveyed during the first round. Younger students were read the survey by the village research team member while older students were asked to complete a written survey form. All who took the survey also provided a written narrative response to a prompt that asked why they either liked or disliked school.

The 27-item survey is designed to measure student attitudes toward school in general, to their classwork, and to their teachers. It is based on the premise that the quality of students' experience with school affects their attitudes and behaviors, which in turn may influence learning. The survey's three subscales (satisfaction with school, commitment to classwork, and reactions to teachers) combine to form a total quality of school life score. High scores indicate students' tendency to react positively to school and school activities while low scores suggest negative reactions.

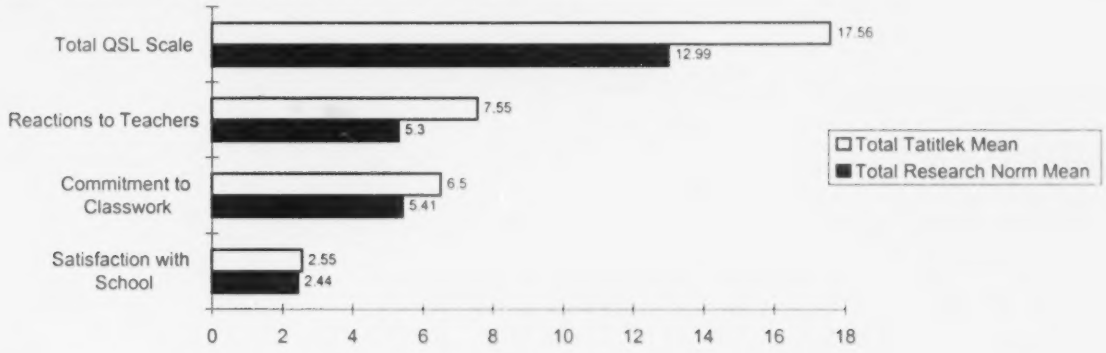
A number of analyses of the survey results were conducted. First, the total mean of Tatitlek student scores were compared to the total mean of the QSL research norm. The research norm was calculated by weighting the mean of each age group in a group of 4151 students sampled by QSL developers. The same process was used to compare the scores of Tatitlek boys and girls to this external norm. Responses were then broken into age groups (ages 9–13 and 14–18) and compared. An important warning: the very small number of Tatitlek students limits the researcher's ability to draw valid conclusions about the survey results. However, the fact that most Tatitlek students at appropriate age levels were surveyed makes the findings highly representative for that group of students. In addition, the research group is demographically quite different from the Tatitlek group and therefore may not lend itself to accurate comparison.

Overall Results

The QSL results reveal that Tatitlek students have generally positive attitudes toward school. On each of the subscales and on the total QSL scale, Tatitlek students rated their

experiences more favorably than did the QSL research norm. Students ranked their reactions to teachers most highly (average 7.55 out of 11), with satisfaction with school and commitment to classwork also quite high (2.55 out of five and 6.5 out of 11, respectively). Their total score on the QSL was over 4 points (out of 27 possible) higher than the research norm. The administration of the survey a second time to include high-school males (who were inadvertently omitted during the first administration) resulted in a slight dip in ratings compared to the original results. Interview and observational data confirm that this small group of male students does not generally express a favorable opinion or attitude about school. See Figure 7 for results of the second survey administration.

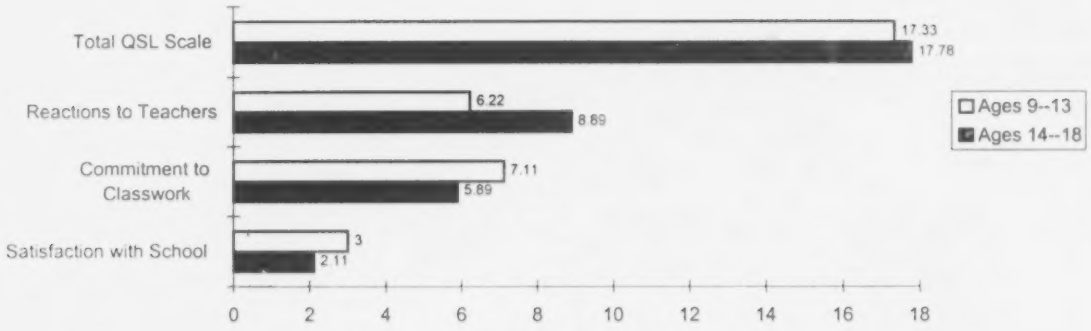
Figure 7
Quality of School Life Scale Results
Tatitlek Students and Research Norm Group



Age Group Differences

For the purposes of analysis, survey responses were divided into two age groups: ages 9–13 (upper elementary and middle school) and ages 14–18 (high school). There were eight cases in the first group, 10 in the later. High-school respondents scored higher on reactions to teachers and on the total QSL than did their younger schoolmates. The younger age group scored higher on commitment to classwork and satisfaction with school. See Figure 8.

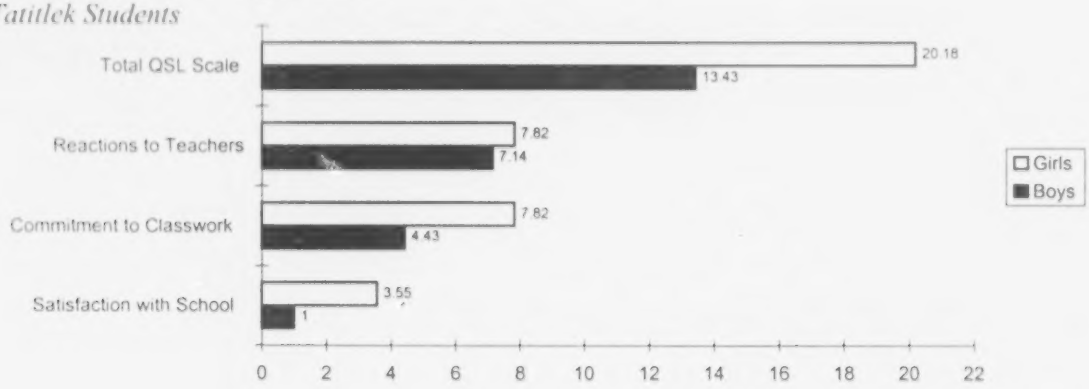
Figure 8
Tatitlek QSL Results
Age Group Comparison



Gender Differences

Eleven girls and seven boys completed and returned the survey on the second administration. On all of the subscales (satisfaction with school, commitment to classwork, and reactions to teachers) and on the total QSL scale, female Tatitlek students ranked their experience more positively than did male students. Boys had only slightly less favorable reactions to teachers than did girls. Research on QSL indicates that girls generally rank higher than boys on satisfaction with schools measures (Epstein and McPartland, 1977). See Figure 9.

Figure 9
Gender Differences in QSL Scores
Tatitlek Students



Written Responses

A total of 18 students responded to the writing prompt "Some students say: 'Overall I like school.' Others say: 'Overall, I hate school.' How do you feel and why?" A broad range of responses were recorded. Nine out of 11 girls said they like school, while only 3 of 7 boys like it. Two boys reported disliking school and an equal number of boys and girls (2 each) felt ambivalent (both liked and disliked school.) Students also gave a variety of reasons why they liked or disliked school. Younger students tended to respond that they liked school because it was fun and exciting, because they like to learn, or because there were good activities. Older students cited specific qualities of the school, such as its teachers, as well as the feeling that they were learning valuable skills for the future. Among the dislikes were that school was boring, classes were too slow, and assignments were "dumb" or seemed irrelevant.

Conclusion

The overall level of satisfaction with teachers, school experience, and classwork is high in the village. Girls are generally more satisfied than boys, high-school students had better reactions to their teachers and higher overall satisfaction scores, and middle-school students had a higher level of commitment to classwork and satisfaction with school. These results are in keeping with the findings of more qualitative assessments of student experiences conducted by researchers in this study. Enthusiasm and commitment seem to slip somewhat in the older years, and boys were substantially less inclined to report positive school experiences than girls.

Student Case Study:
How Standards are Working for One Exceptional Student

There's a buzz of excitement around Tatitlek Community School as the 1997–98 school year draws to a close. This year has been quite different for students in Tatitlek and there is good cause for celebration: students and teachers had their first experience with the new standards-based system in place, high-school kids spent time in Anchorage House learning life and employment skills, another very successful Cultural Heritage week has just ended, and the school's three seniors are busily preparing their graduation ceremony.

For Susan, a few years behind these seniors, this day in school is spent trying to wrap things up for the year. She completes necessary assessments to progress a level in the district's content areas, works on the school yearbook, and helps her friends get ready for their ceremony. Susan is a very bright student who has been able to successfully grasp and work with the new standards system. She has progressed quickly through the standards, working mostly with the seniors at their level. She will likely spend next year finishing up most her high-school work then move on to spend more time at Anchorage House during her senior year.

Her day consists of little in the way of direct academic instruction. Aside from a few whole class exercises and activities, Susan spends much of her time working individually on math, literature, and science. The only whole class lesson is in science in the afternoon. She also spends a good amount of the day working on getting the yearbook together and socializing with other students. When there is work to be done, however, the class becomes deeply engaged in the content and works together to solve problems.

Susan seems to appreciate the value of school quite deeply. She is excited about the opportunities Anchorage House has provided her and knows she has to work hard to succeed after school. She wants very much to go away to college and is even thinking about going overseas.

Susan has had a positive experience with the standards this year. She believes the system is better because students always know where they are in their work and what they have to do to move forward. She also believes that there is a lot more work to do, but that it isn't any harder than it was before.

Student Outcome Data

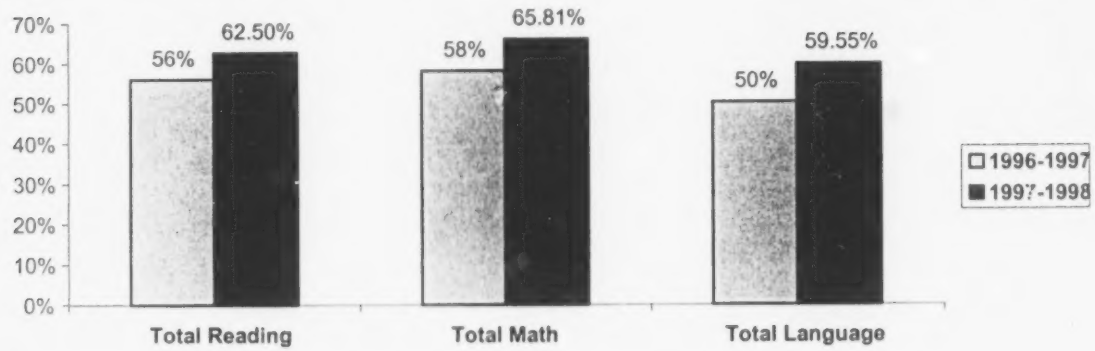
Reporting on student achievement data such as standardized test scores is a very sensitive issue in a village the size of Tatitlek. With as few as one student in each grade, it is impossible to ensure the anonymity of students when their scores are reported by grade level. Citing these concerns, the Chugach School District superintendent rightly declined to release school-level student achievement data because of the difficulty of ensuring privacy with such small numbers of students.

However, district-level student testing data are available and do show strong improvement. When viewing the following results, however, it is important for the reader to keep in mind that these are district-level data and do not necessarily reflect improvements at Tatitlek Community School in particular. In addition, the district lost one of its small schools in 1997 and I was unable to ascertain whether this was a high- or low-performing school. The data may, therefore, be skewed without this school's scores counted in the average. A final caution: the total district enrollment is quite small, 156 students in 1997. This means that the total count at each grade level could be too low for results to be significant.

Chugach students take a number of standardized tests, including the California Achievement Test (CAT/5), the Woodcock reading assessment, and both district and state writing assessments. Results released by the superintendent are presented below.

California Achievement Test 5

Figure 10
Chugach School District CAT/5 Aggregate Test Scores
All Grades, All Schools



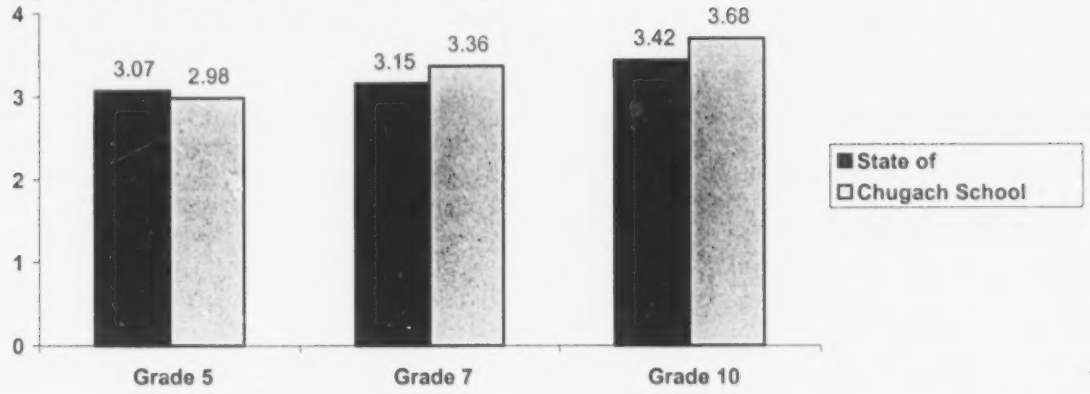
Woodcock Reading Assessment

Table 1
Districtwide Woodcock Reading Results

Word Identification	Average Gain = 2.8 years
Passage Comprehension	Average Gain = 2.0 years
Word Attack	Average Gain = 5.0 years
Word Comprehension	Average Gain = 2.6 years
Total Average Gain	3.1 years

Six Trait Writing Assessment

Figure 11
1998 Alaska State Writing Assessment
Chugach School District and Alaska Averages



Conclusion

By all accounts, student experiences have improved during the reform period between 1995 to the present. Students have more opportunities to learn outside the village and seem to have taken well to the more independent learning now demanded of them, at least at the high-school level. Parents are proud of their children's achievements and feel positive about the direction the district is heading in restructuring its education program. While teachers are stressed, they also feel that the quality of student experiences has improved considerably. If nothing more, students are now receiving a curriculum tightly woven to specified standards and they know what they need to do to progress to the next level. The lack of quantifiable evidence on increases in student achievement at the school level does not deter from the strong qualitative evidence that suggests students are receiving a much better education in Tatitlek now than they have in the past.

Students are clearly benefiting from the numerous efforts to reintroduce cultural experiences into the community. Students look forward to their Cultural Heritage week with great anticipation and are proud of the work they accomplish during this time. They love to dance and perform for the village community, which is clearly proud of them and of the fact that culture is coming alive again in Tatitlek.

Students also gain a great deal from their experiences at Anchorage House and in other hands-on and real-world experiences. Without these innovative efforts they would have fewer opportunities to envision themselves in college, employed outside the village, or working back home. As one student said, "I learn best outside the village. I already know everything that happens here!"

As promising as these results are, the true test of the success of the reform program lies many years off as more students finish school. The goals set for students are very ambitious and the degree to which they attain them is inextricably intertwined with the fate of the community. Living productive lives will require local options for meaningful work or it will require that the community watch its youth leave the village to find work and establish lives on the outside. Either way, the village will have to wrestle with ways to make the change to a jobs-based economy less painful, both for adults and for students.

Interpreting the Results

Changes at Tatitlek Community School over the past four years have been mainly of two types. First, there has been a radical shift in curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies with the implementation of the standards-based system and higher expectations of students. Second, there has been a significant, though much less tangible, transformation in the nature and quality of community relationships with the school. Although work to improve these relationships has not lead to synergy or seamless connections between the two, the village and the school are beginning to understand their common purposes and their reliance on each other to improve the lives and opportunities for their young people, however these may be defined.

There are a number of conditions and factors in place that have promoted and hindered the development of partnerships between school and community in Tatitlek. Participation in Alaska Onward to Excellence is certainly a central element in this scenario but is not alone in contributing to improvement. Significant other factors contributed to the development of a solid relationship between what were in the past two very different worlds that intersected rarely, if at all.

Promoting Positive Relationships

The following are factors identified by this research that have made positive contributions to building the school-community relationship.

1. Much of the positive between the community and the school relies on the strong, innovative, and responsive leadership of the district staff and teachers. Their dedication to changing the nature of the relationship between Alaska Natives and the schools that serve their children is paramount to understanding the improvements at hand in Tatitlek. Few innovations at the school were shepherded through villagers. On the contrary, district staff devised and implemented a promising alternative to the limited opportunities and lower academic standards of the past; and teachers worked with the village leadership to bring about the annual Cultural Heritage Week and more culturally sensitive instruction. Changes would not have happened without the combination of good people with good ideas in a receptive community.
2. There is a very high level of trust among teachers, district staff, and the community. Once villagers recognized the dedication and energy with which staff were going about improvement activities, and once the teaching staff's respect for Native culture was made clear, the school essentially had full community approval of their work. Because teachers socialize with villagers and value their lifestyle (have, in fact, chosen it as their own lifestyle), the legacy of villagers' mistrust of the school has been cleared. There is no doubt among villagers that the current teaching staff cares deeply about the experience and achievement of each child in the village.
3. AOTE played a hand in creating these strong relationships. At the outset of the new school administration in 1995, communities were asked to engage in the job of designing a school system to meet their aspirations for their children's future. Solicitation of village input and work on this scale was unheard of in the history of Tatitlek Community School, and people seem to have felt they were contributing to something important. The basis of the new relationship to the school was established during the AOTE process, generating a sense of trust for the teachers, a feeling of ownership for the school, and renewed hope for children's futures.

4. The new teachers in the village have been perhaps the most important ingredient in the reform recipe. They are highly respectful of Native lifestyle, take an interest in the social activities going on in the village, go hunting and fishing with villagers, understand the importance of bringing cultural activities into the formal education experience, let kids run in and out of their house at all hours, and are generally seen as part of the community rather than "outsiders." In Tatitlek, teachers act as a bridge between the district and the community. They advocate on behalf of the community and translate district policies back to the village. Because of this connective role, villagers' perception of their children's teachers as friends rather than outsiders is pivotal to engendering community support for restructuring the school and introducing new instructional approaches to the classroom.
5. While it was not clearly articulated in interviews, my observations in Tatitlek lead me to the conclusion that there is a strong degree of mutual benefit arising out of the new and improved school-community relationships. Not only are villagers seeing their children benefit from a better academic program and broader array of opportunities, they have also been able to engage in a productive dialogue about their hopes for the future of the village via discussion about their children. Furthermore, they have clearly appreciated and enjoyed the cultural revitalization that occurs during Cultural Heritage Week. This event appears to have been the springboard for more cultural activities both in and outside the classroom. On the flip side, teachers' work in dramatically transforming the school has been broadly supported by the village, making at least the communication of change easier.

These are just a few of the complex conditions that have contributed to improved relations between school and community in Tatitlek. In order to sustain this relationship, these assets must be capitalized upon by continuing to pay attention to quality of relationships, mutual gain, and cultural sensitivity.

Barriers to Sustainability.

There are also a number of factors that could jeopardize the strength of the school-community relationship, especially as the imperative to build on and expand it to form a partnership becomes evident.

1. There is poor definition and acceptance of the notion of sharing responsibility for student success in Tatitlek. Interview data revealed that, while people understood the importance of their support for the school, they did not see easy connections to supporting their children's academics outside of the school. This, coupled with the reluctance of villagers to interfere with the "school's work" and to participate in important school decision making on a widespread basis, means that the responsibility for school improvement and ensuring student success lies solely on the shoulders of district and school staff. Eventually, responsibility will have to become shared because teachers cannot continue to hold exclusive accountability for the success of every student. AOTE could be strengthened by focusing on the difference between learning and schooling and by clearly delineating the terms of mutual responsibility.
2. The amiable personalities and cultural respectfulness of the current teachers and district staff are highly important factors in the success of creating community partnerships. However, because teachers are the most transient of the elements in the partnership, sustainability is highly tentative. New staff at either school or district level will mean that the work to develop trust will have to start from the beginning. Since 1995, Tatitlek Community School has lost and replaced one teacher each year while the teaching couple have provided a stable core. Thus far, good staffing decisions have been made and the teachers have been highly sensitive, motivated, and able. Selecting the right teachers for positions in Tatitlek is critical: one poor interaction between parents and a teacher jeopardizes the fragile relationship.
3. While all of the restructuring and support-building activities have so far been beneficial, they have not been institutionalized in the village. Formal agreements of mutual responsibility between parents and the school do not exist, community-based organizations to extend education outside of the classroom have not been established, and villagers infrequently use the paths they do have at their disposal to influence decisions at the school. The lack of formal structures to support the relationship and turn it into a formal partnership means that

collaboration and community support are even more reliant on the current teaching staff and on the current village leadership.

4. The political fate of small, rural school districts in Alaska is always in question. At the time of this writing, there were efforts underway to make small village districts part of larger "urban" districts. For Tatitlek, this would mean "boroughization" to either Cordova or Valdez. Should such a move occur, the current district would be dissolved and Tatitlek Community School would revert to whatever curriculum and programs were in place in the new district. The work underway and already accomplished would disappear and the community would have to establish new relationships with the larger districts. This move, while not inevitable, is getting a good deal of discussion in the state capitol and locally among those concerned with the prospect of losing their school to a bigger system.
5. The issue of teaching life skills and preparing students to succeed after high school is at the heart of the reform agenda in Tatitlek, as evidenced by its AOTE goals. At present, the strategies and programmatic infrastructure (such as Anchorage House) in place for students focus on preparing them for jobs, education, and living outside of the village. There is little in the formal system that emphasizes the skills and knowledge students will need should they choose to stay in Tatitlek. More specifically, there is no curriculum on the economics of village life, such as the costs of housing and heating, nor any formal exploration of how much a subsistence lifestyle can provide for a family. According to at least one interviewee, AOTE surfaced the issue of also helping students who were not college-bound or interested in leaving the village. But efforts to educate village youth to create productive lives for themselves in the village are informal, unplanned, and unsystematic. This is not to say that no one exerts effort to help students who remain in the village. The district superintendent, teachers, neighbors, and parents all work to help young people find productive work or activities, but these needs are not met through the formal education system. This presents a challenge for the school, since it has been more focused on preparing kids with the skills to leave than with the skills to stay. Staff will have to listen closely to village concerns and needs as the community struggles to positions itself for both a jobs-based economy and traditional subsistence activities. This transformation is likely to be slow and highly controversial, since so many community members do not want to see the village opened-up to Westerners. As Tatitlek goes about creating its own future, the district will need to

continue to show adaptability and strive to make its current school-to-work program better support students who opt to stay and work in the community.

Benefits to Students

Students in Tatitlek have clearly gained a great deal from changes over the past few years. They have better opportunities to learn outside the village; more chances to engage in real-world, hands-on learning; higher academic and social expectations to attain; teachers who genuinely care about their well-being and their learning; and a greatly enhanced knowledge of their Native roots. All three 1998 graduates are college-bound. By their own account, students are generally very satisfied with the quality of their school experience and appreciate the new opportunities provided them. Moreover, students are no longer forced to go to a school that does not respect them and that receives no respect in turn from the community. Kids are encouraged, parents are proud, and staff bend over backwards to innovate and to push kids to greater levels of learning. Perhaps most importantly, students are beginning to gain a better sense of their own futures: how to imagine them, how to create them, and how to sustain them. All of these gains for students have been the result of deliberate and thoughtful change.

This case study rendered no data on quantifiable changes in student achievement over time. I could not ascertain whether student learning has improved enough to be detected on standardized tests or whether the changes in student experiences and opportunity are creating a perception of increased levels of student learning. However, observation and interview data revealed that students are exercising greater control over their learning and can clearly see where they are, where they need to go, and how they need to get there. These skills will serve them well in the future.

Beyond the Bush

The lessons from Tatitlek's experience with systemic school improvement are readily applicable in other rural Alaska settings or anywhere that needs to create community support and involvement to improve student learning.

1. Relationships are the key to improvement. While building a strong educational infrastructure is critical to the sustainability of any improvement effort, the quality of daily interactions and communication between teachers, students, parents, and community members are its bread and butter. These good relationships nurture the communication and understanding necessary for support of substantive school and curricular restructuring. The Chugach School District has implemented a number of innovative, unorthodox changes, such as the conversion to a standards-based system, that would hardly have been possible without a strong degree of community understanding and endorsement.
2. A school improvement process such as AOTE that meaningfully engages the community in designing the reform can be a very strong tool, especially for new superintendents, district staff, or teachers who need a forum to reach out to the community, learn their values and goals for education, and generate support for their work. By the same token, improvement processes that are heavy on community input and responsibility but are not initiated by the community itself run the risk of faltering once the community has to assume responsibility for making changes.
3. The heavy parental involvement component of AOTE and many other similar school improvement efforts needs very careful attention in communities that may not be accustomed to playing a central role in school decision making and instruction. Alternate forms of involvement may need to be introduced.
4. There is an inherent conflict between Western, cookie-cutter schools and the diversity of communities they serve. Respect for the local culture of the community, whether it is a small Alaska Native village or a large ethnically diverse inner city is a central factor in improving school-community relationships and empowering students to succeed. The more a school seeks to identify itself with the community it serves, the more it will genuinely reflect the experiences and realities of its students.

In a village of under 100 residents with only 23 students, it is not surprising that the individual perceptions and actions of key people play a crucial role in formulating and implementing a reform effort. Staff who have been active in supporting the AOTE process feel that it has made significant contributions to educational reform because it has put staff in touch with the undercurrents in the community and enabled the school to determine areas of work that

are in harmony with local needs. It seems clear after two years of data collection that the minimal AOTE training on the instructional changes and the limited community knowledge of possibilities has left generating of specific programs up to district personnel. Even though their work has enjoyed widespread community support in Tatitlek, AOTE did little to educate and empower residents to be more active participants in school decision making or to foster a sense of mutual responsibility for student success. District and school staff have tried to work from the cues provided by community members and have designed some innovative and responsive programs. But as the new programs become realities, it is still unclear whether they will provide the desired student results, remain in keeping with village values, and be sustainable in light of teacher turnover and political pressures. Initial evidence indicates that, if the district can withstand the chaos that characterizes rural Alaska education and maintain fidelity to village values, it stands a strong chance of helping more students reach success. It is already well on its way to doing so.

Appendix A

Description of Anchorage House Program

Anchorage House aims to provide students with real-life opportunities to apply their education and receive skills training in various areas, including life skills, personal development, social development, service learning, urban familiarization, and career development. The Chugach School District has implemented this program in progressive stages so that students can make a gradual adjustment to the world outside their village. The purpose of the experience is "to adequately equip our young people with the skills, experiences, and opportunities necessary to enjoy a successful transition into a desired career of their choice beyond high school."

The experience consists of five different phases, as described below:

Phase 0: Introduction to Anchorage House is intended for younger kids (middle school) to introduce them to Anchorage House and get them started in the program. This phase lasts only a few days.

Phase 1: Search Week lasts for approximately one week. Students and staff live, eat, work and, learn together during this intensive week. During this time, many of the activities focus on self-awareness, problem solving, trust, conflict resolution, resiliency, team building, urban understanding, and exposure to a variety of career and postsecondary choices.

Phase 2: Earn to Return is about one month in duration (broken up into two visits) and offers opportunities for successful, dedicated graduates of phase 1 to act as facilitators with other students. Activities review and reemphasize the lessons learned and practiced from phase 1. We focus our efforts on understanding life after high school by engaging students in job shadowing. Students spend time on the job with employee mentors to gain first-hand knowledge of the daily requirements in the areas of business, service, postsecondary education, entreperneurship, and the skilled trades.

At the end of the phase, students are able to look for and secure a job, use resources for counseling and personal finance, live independently, eat, clean, and travel on their own, and have a good understanding of areas they wish to pursue in each of these five outcome areas:

1. Entrepreneurial—small business development center, job shadows, small business plan.
2. Business—job shadows, employment agency resources
3. Postsecondary education—UAA review, UAA/APU department/school search, interview advisor-life after degree, compare and contrast with three institutions in the Lower 48.
4. Service learning—job shadow, career exploration, community projects
5. Skilled trades—overview and job shadow a concentration of study

Phase 3: Pathways provides an opportunity for "independent" living and emphasis on life after high school by engaging students in various career exploration and internship programs. For approximately one month, students are supported to enable them to move toward independent learning while they are also given a more in-depth exposure to what career settings require and employers expect. By the end of phase 3, students are responsible, self directed, and have a good understanding of where they wish to spend their time for phase 4.

Phase 4: Create Your Future is a 6-to-12 month supervised, self-directed, independent living and learning experience. The students who have completed the prior phases and have been successfully matched with an employer, institute or small business start up will gain specific technical skills, and/or college credit, through hands-on learning, closely integrated with school-based activities.

Appendix B

Chugach School District Standards

1. **Reading:** Students will comprehend a variety of printed materials when reading for pleasure and/or information.

Key Elements:

- Recognize, pronounce, and know the meaning of words encountered in text (decoding)
- Demonstrate literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension of printed material

2. **Writing:** Students will write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Key Elements

- Demonstrate control of content with clear, focused ideas, supporting details, organization, and sentence fluency
- Use correct conventions of spelling, grammar, sentence construction, paragraph structure, punctuation, capitalization, and penmanship
- Use a variety of formats; i.e., outlining, poetry, and informal and formal letter writing, to express ideas and communicate effectively

3. **Communication:** Students will speak effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences. Students will listen and observe for better understanding.

Key Elements:

- Convey a clear idea or message using appropriate language and organization
- Use effective speaking strategies related to eye contact, enunciation, rate, volume, vocal energy, nonverbal techniques, and fluency
- Adapt speaking style in a variety of settings
- Use effective listening strategies to improve communication

4. **Personal Development:** Students will possess the values and skills necessary to reach one's full potential and foster the development of those around them.

Key Elements:

- Applies honesty, respect, and integrity in making personal decisions and interacting with others
- Accepts responsibility for actions
- Recognizes personal strengths and weaknesses and sets goals to evaluate performance
- Applies problem-solving techniques to make healthy choices
- Displays positive self-help skills to overcome shyness and to increase self-confidence
- Applies positive work ethics in everyday situations

5. **Social Development:** Students will develop healthy interpersonal strategies and apply them in both rural and urban environments.

   Key Elements:
   - Demonstrate the behaviors that treat others with respect and dignity
   - Demonstrate respect and fairness when dealing with others in a variety of community functions and activities

6. **Service Learning:** Students will prepare for making a difference through actions of caring for others through personal contact, indirect service, or advocacy, either in the school or in the community.

   Key Elements:
   - Social growth and development through service learning
   - Demonstrate social and civic responsibility in service settings
   - Demonstrate political effectiveness in service settings
   - Demonstrate proficient use of service skills
   - Demonstrate personal development through performing service
   - Demonstrate moral development by acting ethically in service settings
   - Practice basic academic skills in real-life situations by engaging in service
   - Demonstrate increasing ability to do higher-order thinking through performing service
   - Learn by reflecting on service

7. **Career Development:** Students will be prepared for the changing workplace by increasing their understanding of the relationship between education and employment and by improving their career decision-making skills.

   Key Elements:
   - Self-knowledge
   - Educational and occupational exploration
   - Career planning, job shadow, internships, extensive work-based learning

8. **Cultural Heritage:** Students will understand and appreciate Alaska Native and other languages and cultures.

   Key Elements:
   - Describe the characteristics of cultures
   - Understand the various role cultures play in developing communities
   - Understand the various Alaska Native cultural events
   - Communicate using the local Native language

9. **Social Sciences:** Students will understand U.S., world, and Alaska history, geography, and political systems.

Key Elements:

- Use understanding of the chronological flow of human history to identify patterns, ideas, and events over time
- Identify and analyze causal relationships among events, describing how different perspectives affect interpretation of those events
- Read, interpret, and make maps, charts, and graphs to explain spatial relationships
- Identify the physical and human characteristics of places
- Describe the distribution and migration of human populations, ideas, and products
- Explain how humans and the physical environment impact and influence each other
- Describe the structure and function of national, state, and local governments in the U.S.
- Explain the principles and ideals upon which government in the U.S. is based
- Interpret the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizens in the U.S.
- Describe how the world is organized politically and how it relates to U.S. policy

10. **Science:** Students will understand and apply major concepts and processes that are common to all of the sciences.

Key Elements:

- Use unifying concepts of cycle, change, equilibrium, model, systems, and order
- Use the major processes of observing, hypothesizing, measuring, and classifying in scientific investigations
- Identify the structures and properties of matter, including atoms, bonding, elements, and compounds
- Describe chemical and physical changes
- Explain the interaction of energy and matter
- Describe the structure and functions of cells and their components at the molecular level
- Explain the behavior and interdependence of organisms in their natural environments
- Identify the structure and properties of earth and space
- Explain the processes that change the earth and the solar system over time

11. **Technology Development:** Students will operate technology-based tools to manage information, solve problems, and express ideas in a responsible manner.

Key Elements:

- Use a computer to enter and retrieve information
- Use technological tools for learning, communications, and productivity
- Manage and maintain technology tools
- Diagnose and solve common technology problems
- Use technology to observe, analyze, interpret, and draw conclusions
- Examine the role of technology in the workplace and explore careers that require the use of technology
- Use ethics when using software and hardware

12. **Mathematics:** Students will identify and understand mathematic facts, concepts, principles, and theories, applying them in problem situations within and outside the school setting.

Key Elements:

- Compute with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, integers, and rational numbers using mental arithmetic, paper and pencil, calculators, and computers
- Use estimation to solve problems and to check the accuracy of the solution
- Apply appropriate units (metric, U.S. customary, and other systems) and tools of measurement within a required degree of accuracy
- Determine perimeter, area, volume, angle, measure, capacity, weight, and mass
- Construct, draw inferences, and make predictions from charts, tables, and graphs
- Test hypotheses using appropriate statistics
- Apply algebraic formulas to solve problems
- Apply geometric procedures and properties of figures to solve problems
- Solve the problem and verify the solution

Appendix C

Chugach School District
Vision, Beliefs, and Student Goals

Vision Statement

The Chugach School District is committed to developing and supporting a partnership with parents, community, and business that equally shares the responsibility of preparing students to meet the challenge of the ever-changing world in which they live. Students shall possess the academic skill and personal characteristics necessary to reach their full potential. Students will contribute to their community in a manner that displays respect for human dignity and validate the history and culture of all ethnic groups.

Belief Statement

1. We believe reading, writing, and math are the foundation skills necessary for all other learning to enable students to reach their full potential.

2. We believe all students should have respect for self and others, including elders, teachers, parents, students, and community members.

3. We believe it is essential that the community, parents, and students accept joint responsibility in the education of our students.

4. We believe transition skills are necessary to prepare students to meet the challenge of an ever-changing society.

5. We believe a low pupil-to-teacher ratio is important to address the individual needs of all students.

6. We believe instruction must be motivating and relevant to foster students' potential.

7. We believe that different cultural, language, and religious traditions must be recognized and respected.

8. We believe that students will interact in a manner that reflects honesty, integrity, and a never-give-up attitude.

Student Learning Goals (Outcomes)

1. Students will demonstrate effective written and verbal communication to a variety of audiences.

2. Students will effectively use critical thinking and problem-solving skills in making daily decisions.

3. Students will demonstrate a positive attitude that includes self-confidence, leadership, and a sense of humor (character development).

4. Students will learn to set priorities and achieve personal, family, and community goals.

5. Students will possess the skills and attitudes to adapt to an ever-changing environment.

6. Students will understand, preserve, and appreciate their own language and culture and the heritage of others.

7. Students and community will incorporate modern technology to enhance learning.

8. Students will develop the civic responsibilities and the social and academic skills necessary to make a successful transition to life after school in a rural or urban environment.

9. Students will possess the work ethics that enable them to be self-directed, determined, dependable, and productive.

Appendix D

AOTE Action Plan: November 26, 1996
AOTE
Tatitlek
Action Plan (In Progress)

Goal: Students will learn to set priorities and achieve personal, family, and community goals.

Goal: Students will develop the civic responsibilities, social and academic skills necessary to make a successful transition to life after school in a rural or urban environment.

The goals above are the two chosen by the community of Tatitlek via the AOTE process to be those our students needed most to achieve to be successful in life.

The Tatitlek school staff and Chugach School District are involved in ongoing changes in teaching strategies, priorities, and providing new and exciting opportunities for students.

We have compiled a partial list of activities parents and community members are doing now to help students achieve these goals.

We have also compiled a list of possibilities that parents and community members may want to actively pursue to help our young people meet the goals set for them. These possible activities were selected because they directly address the new standards students must meet for graduation.

Parents and community are every student's most important teachers. Your help in modeling, encouraging, and passing on information and skills you know and think are important can never be taught in a classroom. We welcome any and all other ideas or suggestions you may have to raise competent, independent, successful adults.

AOTE
Community Assets and Areas for Improvement
Parent/community involvement at this time

Parents maintain:

- Support for good attendance
- High expectations for academic achievement
- Comfortable and open relationship with school staff and district office
- Encouragement of student's good health, nutrition, and rest
- Support for school staff's ideas and projects

Parents and community support of all school programs:

- Attend
- Encourage
- Praise results and offer assistance when needed or requested
- Participate in costume assembly
- Financial support

Parent and community member investment of time and Energy:

- School/community potlucks
- Volunteer prior to and during Cultural Heritage Week by
  - Opening homes
  - Cooking
  - Hunting
  - Assist in cultural classes
  - Assist in kitchen and clean up
  - Donate food
  - Participate in sharing culture

Tatitlek city government cooperation and assistance in:

- Identifying opportunities to display culture and funding of student travel
- Instilling and encouraging student pride in their culture and community
- Assistance in funding Cultural Heritage Week
- Funding traditional dance efforts
- Support and funding to assist district in advancement of technology and adult education
- Support philosophy of work ethic
- Identify ways in which school and city government can work together

Possibilities for greater involvement in student learning:

Offer emotional and moral support for student attendance at

- Anchorage House
- Youth Area Watch

- Alutiiq dance
- Encourage responsibility and helpfulness to others as well as at home. List ideas such as cooking, cleaning, doing chores. Parents decide what they can get student to do at home and ensure its completion.
- Provide positive reinforcement for accomplishments and behavior at home or in the community
- Make child aware that life may require more than one set of social skills to meet expectations in various settings
- Encourage children to investigate differences between town and village social behavior and to practice town behavior at village events and gatherings
- Involve young people in family financial and budgeting process.
- Pass on homemaking skills: making beds, planning and cooking meals. The timing involved, nutrition, presentation
- Be a role model as a life-long learner: request and enroll in adult evening computer classes, vocational education/shop classes
- Volunteer time in classrooms or teach craft classes
- Support and model sobriety and drug-free lifestyle
- Volunteer to assist in fund-raising activities, as an advisor for Friday lunches, dinner to your door, ice cream night, bazaar, bingo nights, etc.
- Work toward and earn G.E.D.
- Assume role of responsibility in planning and implementing Cultural Heritage Week.
- Develop habits to support personal fitness and wellness
- Oral hygiene
- Nutrition
- Shopping habits
- Volunteer to begin or join a community exercise program/regimen
- Begin a family exercise program
- Secure book on social graces to explore and practice skills in a variety of situations
- At school and at home maintain a record of services performed by students of noncompensated activities for the benefit of others
- Set aside a time for reading. Provide child with a bed lamp to facilitate reading before sleep.

Additional Ideas and Suggestions From Parents and Community Members:

- While at Anchorage House, teach students how to deal with racism if encountered, how to deal with being approached by drug dealers, and teach the consequences of shoplifting, awareness of security systems, etc.
- Julius Juliuson has volunteered to speak to classes regarding street smarts. How to handle racism, drug dealers, gangs, and the consequences of shoplifting.
- Julius has volunteered to teach a small engine repair class if there is any interest.
- Several adults expressed interest in an adult computer class.
- If aware of homework that needs to be done, parent requires child to complete it before being allowed to go to gym night or do anything else.
- Concern that respect for elders isn't what it used to be. Young people should show respect by not talking back, not raising voices to an elder or argue with them, and that they should do whatever elder has requested without question or payment.

- Make my child finish what she starts to encourage personal responsibility.
- Volunteer to act as a chaperone for school and community student travel.
- Let my child make their own choices, and then require that they follow through, whatever the consequences.
- I want the school to keep me informed of my child's academic progress so that I can follow up at home with her strengths and weaknesses.
- I will hold truthfulness in high regard and expect that at school as well so that it will be consistent with the importance of honesty at home.
- Students should maintain a high level of academic performance in order to travel.
- If a student has homework, the parent should keep the child home from gym until it is finished.
- Create Alutiiq dance particular to Tatitlek.
- Students should create a song in appreciation of their chief and his efforts to help them regain their culture and Native dance.

Tatitlek Community School Action Plan

(Names of persons responsible have been removed for privacy)

Learning Goal:

(#8) Students will develop the civic responsibilities and social and academic skills necessary to make a successful transition to life after school in a rural or urban environment

Task/Action Steps	Timeline	Support Needed	Resources & Materials	Evaluation/ Assessment	Comments
Co-ed Basketball Team	Ongoing			Record of those participating on a regular basis. Check for greater community participation. Attempt Friday night games and record attendance by community.	Community Team 2 evenings per week. Possible competition with town teams.
Co-ed Volleyball	Ongoing			Identify interest in learning how to play the game properly, and then monitor participation.	Community Co-Ed
Value and maintain good attendance, high academic standards, and open relations with school and staff	Ongoing				
Generate list of chaperones and volunteers for school projects					
Hunt for Youth Area Watch and Cultural Heritage	Ongoing			Record number of seals presented to students for research and cultural heritage.	Encourage any and all hunters to assist.
Maintain cultural awareness	Ongoing				

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Tatitlek Community School Action Plan

Task/Action Steps	Timeline	Support Needed	Resources & Materials	Evaluation/ Assessment	Comments
Locate Native song writer	End of April/Beg. of May			Presence of Tatitlek School before or during Cultural Heritage Week. Record number of songs and dances written and executed.	Invite to teach students and staff how to create traditional song and dance particular to Tatitlek.
Support Anchorage House	Ongoing			Number of and success of students who attend and complete the 1 month session.	
Community educators share experiences with students	Ongoing during the school year			Record presentations for future use/reference. Students evaluate the usefulness of information and probability of applying it to their own lives.	Seek out other volunteers.
Computer literacy for adults	May '97 perhaps ongoing			Number of adults who show interest, attend, and complete the course offered	
Elders' Week (plan to execute)	End of March			Record community interest and participation in journal form. Student participation recorded on evaluation tool for service learning standard.	

Tatitlek Community School Action Plan

Task/Action Steps	Timeline	Support Needed	Resources & Materials	Evaluation/ Assessment	Comments
Devise and use tool to record student activities and deeds related to the service learning standard as evidence	Ongoing			Create instrument to record service learning activities at school and at home. Evaluation will be successful use of tool to gather evidence of service learning.	
Pursue completion of a village drum	Cultural Heritage Week				Students work cooperatively to construct a Tatitlek village drum—larger than most for display and performing.

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